



Adult Social Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 March 2009

Present:

Mr A Adams	Mrs S M Matthews (Chairman)
Mr C Armes	Mr J H Perry-Warnes
Mrs J Eells	Mr A D Pond
Mr D Harrison	Mr N C Shaw
Mr C How	Mr T Wainwright
Mrs J A Howe	Mrs C Ward
Mr C A Hull	Mr A J Wright

Substitute Members Present and Apologies:

Mr F Pitt-Pladdy for Mr J Joyce
Mr R Blower
Mrs S A F Rice

Also Present:

Mr C Mowle – Non-voting Cabinet Member
Mrs S Gurney – Non-voting Deputy Cabinet Member
Mr J Joyce (Attending after having been substituted for the meeting)

Officers/Others:

Bharat Raghu	-	Attending as a member of the public for the Public Question at Item 5
Harold Bodmer	-	Director of Adult Social Services
Janice Dane	-	Head of Finance, Adult Social Services
Terry Cotton	-	Quality Assurance Officer, Domiciliary Care, Adult Social Services
Colin Sewell	-	Performance Manager, Adult Social Services
James Bullion	-	Assistant Director, Community Care, Adult Social Services
Lorraine Barrett	-	Head of Service, Community Care, Adult Social Services
Mike Gleeson	-	Head of Democratic Support, Adult Social Services
Chris Wilton	-	Head of Democratic Services
Sue Happs	-	Project Manager, Community Care, Adult Social Services
Dennis Bacon	-	Chairman of Norfolk Independent Care
Jeremy Bone	-	Planning and Policy Officer, Adult Social Services

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr R Blower and Mrs S Rice

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 January 2009 were received by the Adult Social Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

5 Public Question Time

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel received the following public question from Mr Bharat Raghu:

“The way the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) reached its judgements has been criticised up and down the country. Only this week I read of a Council that has publicly joined the bandwagon of critics. There are cases of where star ratings have been changed only after threats of Judicial Review. There are cases where CSCI would not change their judgement about a home even when information is available to them that could change that judgement. This is on top of the fact that we have a star rating system that is flawed. In these circumstances, how can you be sure that the star rating of a care home properly reflects the true quality of the home?”

In response the Chairman gave the following answer:

“I think we can all agree that we should be ensuring that there are quality services available for all people in Norfolk. Given the County Council’s responsibility for commissioning services and the significant investment in this, it is essential that we ensure that we reward and recognise quality.

Our proposal means that we will be linking price and quality and I do not believe that anyone would disagree with this principle or that we should not be paying the same for services where one is seen as poor and another is excellent.

In moving to reward quality we need to use a benchmark and at this point in time the most transparent system to use is the CSCI star ratings. These are published ratings based on the visits by inspectors to care homes. I acknowledge that there are some practical issues here and that is why this year we see this as a pilot scheme.

We have no intention of abandoning poor services, in fact we want to work with them to improve, and as part of this process we will be making available a fund, to be managed by our Quality Assurance Team, to support these homes and assist them to improve quality.

The question also raises concerns about how the Commission for Social Care Inspection works, which I cannot answer, and really needs to be addressed to the Commission. All I can reiterate is that this is a direction we wish to take and the use of CSCI ratings is the fairest and most transparent at present.”

Mr Raghu then asked the following supplementary question:

“Where a home’s star rating has been changed, eg following Judicial Review, would the increased fees be paid retrospectively and, how would you go about identifying the residents who were in the home at the time and the duration?”

In reply, the Director gave the following answer:

“Increases will be based on the published CSCI ratings as at 1st April and reviewed annually. Where a mistake has been made in the star rating of a home, then increased fees will be backdated to the previous 1st April. The Department keeps detailed records and will be able to identify residents who are in a home at a particular time and the duration of their stay.”

6 Local Member Issues/Member Questions

There were no Local Member issues.

7 Cabinet Member Feedback on Previous Overview and Scrutiny Panel Comments

(a) Delivering Joined-up Health and Social Care Services
(b) Procuring the Adult Substance Misuse Treatment System for Norfolk

The annexed reports by the Cabinet Member were received and noted.

The reports gave feedback to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the above mentioned issues.

It was noted that these issues had not previously been reported to the Review Panel before having been considered by the Cabinet.

SCRUTINY ITEMS

8 Outcomes of the Visits by Members of the Quality and Home Care Working Group

The annexed report by the Director of Adult Social Services was received.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel received a report from the working group following visits by Members to service users who received home care from independent sector and in-house providers to assess how quality standards were being set and maintained. It was noted that all the service users that Members had visited had been carefully chosen and had welcomed the interest that had been shown in their home-care service.

During discussion, the following key points were made:

- The Department had a dedicated Quality Assurance Officer who conducted regular unannounced monitoring visits to ensure quality was always of the highest standard.
- It was noted that some service users had expressed concern about the system for on-going billing, which left them unclear at the start of their care about the level of payment. Because most people needed care very quickly, it could take up to three weeks before service users received their first bill.

- It was noted that the Working Group would continue to meet and in so doing could review a number of planned improvements in the billing system, designed partly to improve arrangements with the independent sector.
- It was noted that as the independent sector provision increased, it would be possible to phase out the use of 'mixed packages of care' where more than one provider was involved, and also to ensure a greater consistency for service users.
- The Director spoke about the publicity associated with recent changes in home-care provider in Norwich and parts of south Norfolk. The changes were part of a re-tendering of nine home-care contracts in Norfolk, designed to create an increased number of care homes, and to strengthen the contractual arrangements with the independent sector. Details about the changes could be found in a briefing note that had been sent to Members prior to the meeting.

The Panel agreed to the following recommendations from the Working Group:

- The quality of home care provided was generally very good and people with complex care needs were being well supported in their own homes, by both public and private sector providers.
- The Panel acknowledged the calibre and commitment of care workers, supporting service users and their informal carers.
- The Panel endorsed the approach of focussing on the service user and their informal carer's experience of receiving care being central to assessing the quality of home care support.
- The Panel asked to receive regular reports on Quality in Home Care, which would include Norfolk First Support (the in-house re-ablement service)
- That the Working Group of Members should continue to meet at least twice yearly to continue to oversee the quality of home-care in Norfolk. The Working Group should undertake annual visits to service users.
- That further member visits should take place in September 2009 and focus on the new home-care providers. Particular focus should be on the completeness of service users and care-workers' files, the quality and quantity of training offered to care-workers, and the level of record keeping in the service users home.
- The Panel endorsed the view of the Working Group that home-care visits should be an element of induction for Members of the Panel. Furthermore, the issue of home-care should feature, in an informal way, for all new Members.
- That there should be a review of service users who receive services from more than one provider. This includes situations where two service users in their own home receive services from more than one agency.
- The Scrutiny Panel should receive the outcome of this officer review at its meeting in September 2009.
- That the planned development of Information Technology in respect of rostering of in-house services and billing for services be reviewed and reported back to the Panel.

9 Review of Community Meals

The annexed report by the Director of Adult Social Services was received.

The Panel received a report which gave a range of options for changing and improving the Community Meals Service.

During the course of discussion the following key points were made:

- The use of the Community Meals Service was declining.
- The Department intended to improve the quality, choice and coverage of the Community Meals Service.
- It was important to offer the same quality of provision to all, and to similar standards.
- Users should be able to choose from a large menu, that included specialist diets.
- Food should be sourced from local providers.
- The meal quality should be consistently high, including (for non-frozen meals) the temperature at which it was served.
- It was noted that with the exception of option 2, the options set out in the report required Norfolk County Council to cease its current contracts, including the largest with Norfolk County Services. Ending this contract would affect other areas of Adult Social Services, specifically Residential Care Homes.
- Those currently providing the community meals service were unable to support adults with dementia who required assistance to prepare and eat their meal.
- It was noted that there were special devices/aids that could be purchased on the open market to help people with dementia to prepare their own food.
- Members asked for further reports to the Panel to give careful consideration to all the available options and explain what can be done to help those with dementia who need support at meal times.

Resolved

- (a) That the Panel accept the findings of the Review of Community Meals Report and agree in principle to:
- Work towards a meal service that is universally available across the County
 - Ensure that the service is flexible and equitable and offers a diverse choice of nutritious food
 - Ensure that people are supported in appropriate ways to access food options that are healthy and enjoyable.
- (b) That the Panel receive a further report on the results of consultation around different options available to achieve the above-mentioned objectives.

10 Update Regarding Delayed Discharges

The annexed report by the Director of Adult Social Services was received.

The Panel received a report that gave an update regarding delayed transfers of care from hospitals in Norfolk.

The Panel noted the report.

11 Scrutiny Items Progress Report

The annexed report by the Director of Adult Social Services was received.

The Panel received a report that summarised the scrutiny work programme and gave an update on progress.

The Chairman noted the excellent performance by the Adult Social Services staff.

The Panel noted the report.

OVERVIEW ITEMS

12 2008-9 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report

The annexed report by the Director of Adult Social Services was received.

The Panel received a report that stated the forecast revenue outturn position for the financial year 2008/9 was an overspend of £0.521m, based on the information available at the end of January 2009, period 10. At this stage of the financial year there was slippage predicted on the capital programme of £3.584m.

The following key points were noted:

- The comment was made that at a time of economic recession the Department should aim to stimulate the local economy by spending monies agreed for large capital schemes at the earliest opportunity.
- The comment was also made that it would be useful to have a representative of Norfolk Property Services Limited attend the next meeting to answer detailed questions concerning capital building schemes.
- It was noted that a number of capital schemes took place over more than one financial year.
- The number of older people in residential and nursing placements had started to show a slight increase. The Department was looking to maintain numbers at their current level.
- The slippage in the budget concerning housing grants to resettle clients from Little Plumstead Hospital related to delays in settling legal charges on properties.
- The Learning Difficulties Community Homes Resettlement Scheme was expected to be completed by September 2009.

The Panel noted the report.

13 Payment Levels for Independent Sector in 2009/10

The annexed report by the Director of Adult Social Services was received.

The Panel received a report about proposals going to Cabinet on 6 April 2009 concerning payment levels to independent sector providers of care services for adults for the 2009/10 financial year.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr Dennis Bacon, the Chair of Norfolk Independent Care (NIC), an umbrella group that brought together representatives from independent care providers.

The following key points were noted:

- For 2009/10 the price of residential and nursing home packages would be linked to the quality of care provided as a way of rewarding the best providers. This was

generally supported by Norfolk Independent Care.

- Mr Bacon said that in the current economic recession a number of independent care homes were struggling to financially break-even. Those running independent care homes were finding it increasingly difficult to obtain the funds necessary to make capital improvements, and would welcome whatever assistance the County Council could provide.
- The Panel noted that support packages would be provided for struggling homes to help improve quality, and manage the impact of the economic recession. A fund of £150,000 had been identified for this purpose.
- The standard achieved by independent homes and the fees that they charged were well known to the Department.
- It was suggested that Members should search the CSCI website for information about the residential homes that were situated in their divisions.

The Panel supported the proposed fee increases and noted that the matter would be reported back to Members of the Panel after the Cabinet had reached a decision.

14 Adult Social Services Performance Report

The annexed report by the Director of Adult Social Services was received.

The Panel received a report that explained changes to the performance assessment framework of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and explained performance progress against the key performance indicators for 2008/9.

The Panel noted the report.

15 Service Planning Update

The annexed report by the Director of Adult Social Services was received.

The Panel received a report that outlined the proposed service planning framework for Adult Social Services for 2009/12, detailing the elements that would be monitored in the coming year.

The Panel noted the report.

16 Norfolk Local Involvement Network

The annexed report by the Head of Democratic Services was received.

The Panel supported a protocol for referrals to the Council's scrutiny structure from the Norfolk Local Involvement Network that was attached at Appendix A to the report.

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm

Chairman



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