

Public Document Pack



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PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 16th December, 2015

SUPPLEMENTARY PACK

1.	CARER RECRUITMENT	PSC49-2015
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To receive a report on Carer Recruitment from the Fostering Manager.

(Pages 3 - 8)

2.	JOINT CHAIRS NOTES	PSC56-2015
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To receive the notes of the Joint Chairs Steering Group held on 20th November 2015.

(Pages 9 - 14)

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PSC49-2015

Powys County Council Fostering Service

Report for Scrutiny Committee 16th December

Fostering Marketing and Recruitment Update

Marketing Activity Undertaken

Specific adverts have been created to focus on the recruitment of teenagers. These have been distributed in the following ways –

- across some of the main postal areas across Powys via Royal Mail
- placed in County Times, Brecon & Radnor & Shropshire Star w/c 30th November to tie in with the Royal Welsh Winter show
- attendance at Winter show 30th November & 1st December
- Digi story developed
- 'A day in the life of a foster carer' article sent to In Focus for inclusion in next edition
- Teenager leaflets sent to Pensions Dept for inclusion in pension letters to imminent retirees.
- Twitter feed set up in English & Welsh
- Regular posts on Facebook
- Discussion with PAVO as to using their networks for dissemination of teenager adverts etc

Recruitment Update

Since 1st September 2015 until 25th November and following a more focused approach in advertising for carers to provide placements for teenagers and children with more complex needs we have received 31 enquiries from people expressing an interest in fostering.

Of these:

10 have been closed – reasons cited: no spare bedroom (1), moving house (2), young baby at home (2), IFA carer not wishing to transfer (1), not ready (3), no response to follow up (1)

3 initial visit have been undertaken – 2 recommended to progress to training and application, 1 recommended not to progress.

11 have requested initial visits or have appointments scheduled. It is planned that these will be completed by the end of December where possible. However, some applicants have asked for visits after Christmas. These visits will be completed in January.

7 are being followed up – calls, emails or letters sent

Of the 31 enquiries received, interest has been expressed in the following areas of fostering -

Teenagers: 2 have expressed interest in teenagers

0-11 years: 14 have expressed a wish to foster this age group and not older.

Respite: 2 have specified a wish to offer respite only

Unspecified: 13 enquirers have not specified an age, wishing to seek advice and guidance

Applications to Foster

7 applications are outstanding – and these people have been contacted to encourage completion of the application form.

Of these 3 are wishing to consider teenagers, 3 respite only and 2 wish to foster 0-11 years only.

1 application has been received for the provision of respite care

A further 3 couples are currently attending Skills to Foster preparation training.

Assessments

5 assessments are currently being undertaken.

1 is specifically looking to provide placements for teenagers

2 are being assessed to provide respite care

1 is looking to provide short term care

1 is a specific friends and family assessment

Where people have expressed an interest in caring for teenagers, we are clear that these assessments will be prioritised to ensure placement availability for this group of young people. I would expect that where possible assessments will be completed within three months providing there are no issues that arise during the assessment period.

Current Approved Foster Carers and provision of placements

This provides information on the number of approved foster carers and the number of children they are able to provide placements for and the current number of vacancies available.

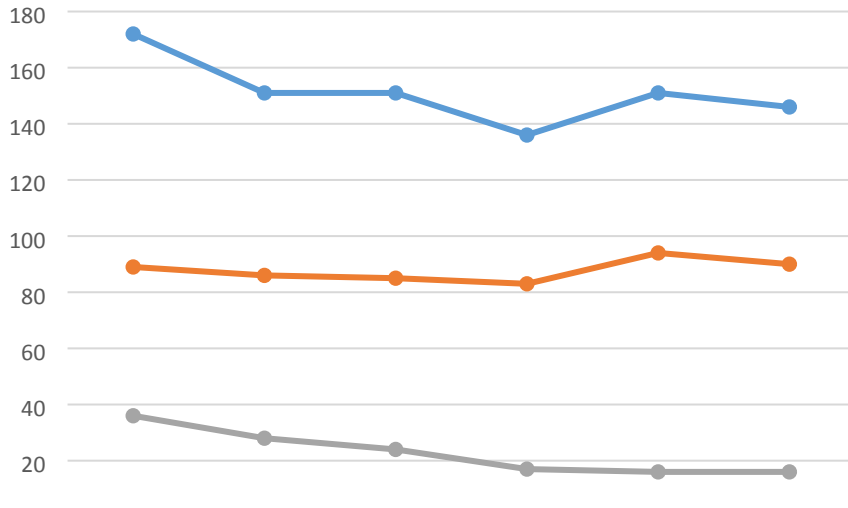
		Placements available	Vacancies
Total number of carers	120	194	38
Generic	69	114	22
Respite/Short Breaks	40	62	16
Family and friends	11	18	0

Data Comparison of Placements

This information provides a summary of children's placements across the last three years and evidences a steady increase in children placed with in-house foster carers. Our current rate is at 62%.

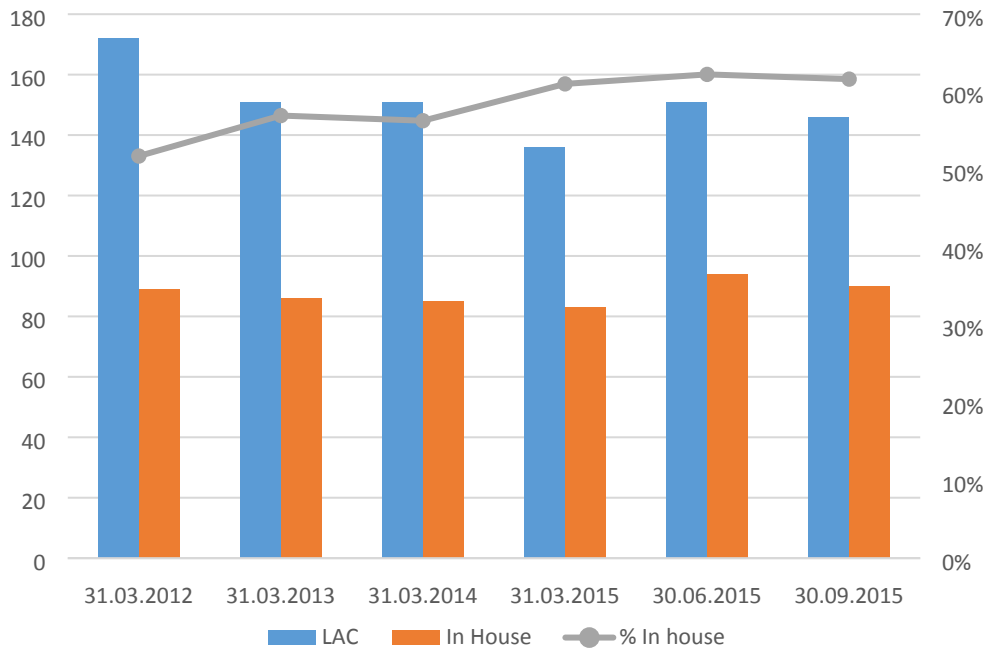
	31.03.12	31.03.13	31.03.14	31.03.15	30.06.15	30.09.15
LAC	172	151	151	136	151	146
In House	89	86	85	83	94	90
Friends and Relatives	19	18	16	16	18	17
Adoptive	10	8	6	1	1	4
Parents	5	4	10	7	10	7
Independent Living	2	1	1	2	2	2
IFA	36	28	24	17	16	16
Residential – External Provision	7	3	5	5	4	5
Residential – Internal Bannau Unit	3	3	4	5	5	5
Secure Unit	1	0	0	0	1	1
% In house	52%	57%	56%	61%	62%	62%

Looked After Children and Placement Type



	31.03.2012	31.03.2013	31.03.2014	31.03.2015	30.06.2015	30.09.2015
LAC	172	151	151	136	151	146
In House	89	86	85	83	94	90
IFA	36	28	24	17	16	16

Looked After Children and % Placed with In-house Carers



Summary

Whilst we have seen an increase in the numbers of enquiries being received by the team, we continue to find that people new to fostering are not initially looking to provide placements for teenagers or children with more complex needs.

However, we should be encouraged by the increase in enquiries and look to continue to recruit suitable generic foster carers. It is important that we invest in these applicants, provide them with appropriate training for the role as a foster carer, provide them with effective support and supervision in their role and over time assist in their development and confidence to consider caring for teenagers and children with more complex needs and behaviours.

We have many examples of foster carers who initially applied to become respite carers and who have gone on to provide long term stable placements for children when they have increased their experience of fostering on a short term basis. We have carers who have been fostering for Powys for many years some of whom have been doing so for 30+ years.

We believe that as a service if we provide the support and positive recognition to our foster carers of the invaluable role they play, they in turn will show true dedication and commitment to not only the children that are placed with them but also to continuing to provide a service to Powys County Council.

Our intentions over the coming months are to continue the increased activity in marketing campaigns to ensure a high rate of enquiries continues particularly for carers able to provide placements for teenagers.

We will implement our new Tier Model to encourage career progression of foster carers and with this the encouragement to consider providing placements for teenagers. A clear training and development package will be implemented from April in line with the new training programme which will focus more heavily on targeted training for those caring for teenagers. Further development will also be made around the support packages available for these foster carers to enable them to maintain placements that become more challenging and complex.

Lisa Hocking
Fostering Team Manager
02.12.15

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS STEERING GROUP HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON FRIDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2015

PRESENT:

County Councillors D R Jones, S C Davies, E M Jones and JG Morris

In attendance:

Officers: Peter Jones (Professional Lead - Strategic Planning and Performance), Liz Patterson (Scrutiny Officer), Clive Pinney (Solicitor to the Council), Lisa Richards (Scrutiny Officer) and Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services)

1.	APOLOGIES	JCSG1
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John Brautigam, Paul Griffiths (Strategic Director – Place); Amanda Lewis (Strategic Director – People); Jeremy Patterson (Chief Executive), David Powell (Strategic Director – Resources).

2.	DRAFT NOTES - FOR CONSIDERATION	JCSG2
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Documents Considered:

- Draft Notes – 20th May, 2015

Issues Discussed:

- Item 2 – Service Improvement Plan Scrutiny – Of 156 comments made by scrutiny, 69% of the comments had been accepted and there was no change in response to 31% of the comments.
- Community benefits policy – it was noted that this was being considered at the Cabinet meeting on 24th November. Members requested an update on the current position.

Outcomes:

- **Draft Notes were Noted.**

3.	DISCUSSION WITH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR REGARDING POTENTIAL SCRUTINY ITEMS.	JCSG3
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Documents Considered:

- None

Issues Discussed:

- As the relevant officers had presented apologies for meeting the item was not discussed.

4.	WAO ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT	JCSG4
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Documents Considered:

- Wales Audit Office – Annual Improvement Report 2014-15 – August 2015

Issues Discussed:

- Corporately there were no recommendations forthcoming from the WAO report. The only recommendations attached to the report were those arising from national reports undertaken by the WAO. It appeared that the WAO were undertaking more national rather than local studies. The likelihood would be that the WAO would test the Council over the next 12 months on how it had reacted to national report recommendations.
- The timescale for the development of the tracker for performance monitoring which had been agreed with the Joint Chairs had slipped due to staffing efficiency savings and was being re-considered.
- Agenda page 19 – Recommendation P2 – it seemed that the WAO were expecting the Council to reduce budgets without compromising services. However it was clarified that this was not the case and the WAO were more likely to be interested in the Council's understanding of what could be delivered with a reduced financial package.
- Agenda page 46 – Staffing data – Members requested an explanation of the staffing data to assess whether the figures in the report were both accurate and up to date to 2015.
- Agenda page 19 – Recommendation P2 – question regarding the inclusion of service levels in Impact Assessments. It was clarified that it was up to the service to decide what is included in the assessment. The process of impact assessments had been tightened up based on last year's experience and emerging legislation. All the current budget proposals are subject to a single impact assessment, with the aim that these assessments would be updated over time.
- Assessments could also be added to the risk register as a means of tightening the process.
- Members expressed concern as to whether all last year's savings had both been identified and achieved. Concern was also expressed as to whether the Council would get to a point where it was only providing core services.
- Agenda page 19 – Recommendation P4 - the review of scrutiny following the national review needed to be updated as the Joint Chairs had previously felt that the document tried to achieve too much in too short a timescale and that it required re-prioritisation.
- It was recognised that the need to assess the impact of scrutiny was not very robust and would need to be improved.
- It was noted that reporting back from Cabinet to scrutiny required strengthening and it was suggested that the Democratic Services Committee be asked to consider this for inclusion in the Constitution.
- Details should also be included on the Cabinet Forward Work Programme of any forthcoming scrutiny reports which would be considered by the Cabinet.
- The Joint Chairs requested that a copy of the new Single Impact Assessment form be circulated. It was suggested that a percentage of these assessments would need to go through the scrutiny process and there would need to be a discussion at officer level as to how this was undertaken.
- Members expressed concern that there were difficulties being encountered by the Council in employing to part time jobs especially for jobs over 16 hours which would affect entitlement to benefits. It was suggested that the Employment Committee be asked to consider this matter.

Outcomes:

	Action	Completion Date	Action By
(i)	Recommended to the Democratic Services Committee that the Constitution be strengthened to improve the reporting back on scrutiny recommendations by the Cabinet.	01/16	WR
(ii)	That the Employment and Appeals Committee be asked to request a report regarding vacancies.	12/15	WR
(iii)	That a copy of the single impact assessment be circulated to the Joint Chairs.	12/15	WR / PJ

5.	PERFORMANCE REPORTS	JCSG5
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Documents Considered:

- None.

Issues Discussed:

- A referral from the Audit Committee – Finance and Performance Working Group was considered regarding the performance information currently provided to scrutiny.
- A number of concerns had been raised but as the Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee was not present who could present the detail, it was suggested that the item be deferred to the next meeting.
- It was suggested that the Finance and Performance Working Group should be looking at the quality of the process rather than detailed performance reports. It was also suggested that there was a need for better service improvement plans, so that there was not only a setting of objectives but also expected outcomes.

Outcomes:

	Action	Completion Date	Action By
(i)	That the item be deferred to the next meeting	22/01/16	WR
(ii)	That a meeting be convened between the Chair, Scrutiny Manager, and the Professional Lead – Strategic Planning and Performance prior to the next meeting.	22/01/16	WR / PJ

6.	SOCIAL CARE	JCSG6
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Documents Considered:

- None

Issues Discussed:

- Concerns were expressed by Adult Social Care relating to the multiple scrutiny of the service by the Audit Committee, the Internal Audit Working Group, the Finance Scrutiny Panel and the Adult Social Care Working Group.
- It was suggested that the Audit Committee should pass on its concerns to the scrutiny group or that greater cooperation should be undertaken between the Audit and People Scrutiny Committee and their groups. This

had been tried in the past but had had limited success as each group have different terms of reference and come to a joint group with different levels of knowledge.

- It was suggested that scrutiny was looking at issues from different perspectives and a more holistic view was required to better co-ordinate work and ensure that services are subject to the appropriate levels of scrutiny.

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

7.	COMPOSITION OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES	JCSG7
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Documents Considered:

- None.

Issues Discussed:

- The Joint Chairs was asked to consider the composition of the Council's scrutiny committees arising from a budget line in the current draft budget which required the Council to reduce the cost of committees.
- This had been considered at a recent meeting of the Audit Committee, and that committee felt that as a minimum every Member should sit on at least one committee.
- The meeting noted that the responsibilities of scrutiny was continually changing and being increased e.g. recent addition of school scrutiny by Estyn.
- Members considered that the Council needs to consider why committees are needed and then how many it needed. It was further suggested that as a starting point there should be a discussion of this matter by group leaders.
- The questionnaires sent to Councillors in 2012 should be revisited to see whether Members' time preferences for meetings had changed. Consideration should also be given to which Members did not attend meetings.
- It was questioned whether scrutiny should be undertaking more of a social research role rather than looking at day to day operation of services.
- It was acknowledged that the Council needed to work differently and that the committee structure needed to change to reflect this.

Outcomes:

	Action	Completion Date	Action By
(i)	That the group leaders consider the composition of Council committees		WR
(ii)	That changes need to be in place before May 2017 at the latest. However changes should be made as soon as possible.		
(iii)	That the questionnaire should be re-sent to Members seeking their views about the timing of meetings.		WR

8.	UPDATE - REVIEWS IN PROGRESS	JCSG8
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Documents Considered:

- Update on current reviews in progress

Issues Discussed:

- Some of the items considered in the previous notes were not included in the update (minute item 3). However it was noted that some of these items had been picked up within the current workload by Working Groups.
- It was suggested that the Working Groups should feed back to the Joint Chairs identifying any issues or blockages to get their work completed.

Outcomes:

	Action	Completion Date	Action By
(i)	Chairs of committees to report back to the next meeting on where there are issues being faced by Working groups.		

9.	WORK PROGRAMME	JCSG9
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Documents Considered:

- Work Programme for 2015-16

Issues Discussed:

- None

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

10.	DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS - FOR INFORMATION	JCSG10
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- 22nd January, 2016
- 18th March, 2016
- 13th May, 2016
- 15th July, 2016
- 16th September, 2016
- 25th November, 2016

11.	DRAFT NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S)	JCSG11
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Documents Considered:

- 11th June, 2015
- 24th September, 2015

Issues Discussed:

- None.

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

12.	LSB DATES - FOR INFORMATION	JCSG12
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- 3rd December, 2015
- 10th March, 2016
- 9th June, 2016

- 22nd September, 2016
- 1st December, 2016

13.	LSB SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	JCSG13
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Documents Considered:

- None

Issues Discussed:

- It was reported that the current position on appointments to the LSB Scrutiny Committee is as follows:
 - Powys Local Health Board – appointment under discussion.
 - Powys Community Health Council – appointment under discussion.
 - Police and Crime Commissioner – declined offer at present but will review at a later date.
 - PAVO – Vice-Chair appointed – Mr Martin Nosworthy.

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

**County Councillor J.G. Morris
Chair**