

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
23rd April 2015**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Darren Mayor, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Aled Davies

Can the Portfolio holder for Adult Social Care give a complete and frank explanation for the failure of yet another home care contract?

Alpha/Bryce Care

The decision to terminate the contract with Alpha/Bryce Care at midnight Tuesday 7 April 2015, was taken after serious concerns were raised regarding their financial viability and the impact on the safeguarding of service users, should the company cease to trade without prior being notice given to PCC.

The overall viability of the company was thoroughly risk assessed and the decision to proactively manage the situation and transfer the service in-house, was taken after all attempts had been made to help Alpha/Bryce Care resolve their financial issues

The decision was based on the following key areas.

Financial Viability

- The company had on several occasions required and had been given a cash advance from PCC for work undertaken, to meet their payroll commitments.
- Alpha had accrued substantial debts including debts owed to HMRC and to other sub-contractors and thereby increasing the risk of the sub-contractors viability.
- Company accounts clearly indicated that they would have difficulty in repaying these debts.
- One of the sub contracted providers had issued a statutory demand, as a result of the non-payment of a large debt, and the institution of insolvency proceedings were suspended for 3 weeks when Alpha/Bryce Care paid an initial payment. The 3 week deadline was approaching, with no indication that the balance would be fully paid. Hence the need for PCC to proactively manage the situation.
- Serious concern at the overall financial management of Alpha Care following the financial audit that PCC undertook.

Quality Assurance/Safeguarding

- An inspection report from CSSIW highlighted a number of concerns with the company in particular the number of missed calls
- Agency have failed to report missed calls to the council via the agreed missed call reporting procedure
- Concern at how accurate rotas would be maintained to show the shifts planned and delivered and any changes required (eg to cover sickness, leave etc).

Contingency Planning

- A Contingency Plan was already in place but this was revised and reviewed in light of the company's financial position.
- The Plan was subject to a rigorous assessment both internally and CSSIW, who were satisfied with the contingency planning arrangements.
- A Communication Action Plan formed part of the Contingency Plan.
- A Contingency Planning team consisting of senior managers and support staff was put in place, to manage and coordinate the transition.
- Notice was served at 1.00 p.m. on Tuesday 7 April and took effect from midnight on the same day.
- On the afternoon of 7 April the plan was put into effect:
 1. Service users and Alpha/Bryce staff were simultaneously contacted to inform them of developments.
 2. Alpha/Bryce staff were informed that they would transfer across to PCC and to continue to work as normal. More than 90% of the workforce transferred to provide services direct for the Council.
 3. That evening and the following morning service users were called to ensure they had received a service the previous day. They were again called the following day to ensure that the service had been delivered.
 4. 4 missed calls over the weekend were identified and they were subsequently provided with a replacement worker.
 5. PCC had rostering information previously supplied by Alpha/Bryce Care and as a result any identified gaps in the worker to service use roster, were picked up by PCC re-ablement team or by other domiciliary care providers.
 6. PCC, Swansea and NPT were in daily contact and were able as a result, to manage any cross boundary workforce issues.
 7. Alpha/Bryce staff attended 3 drop in centres across the county, where they were given a briefing on the situation. They were issued with protective clothing, PCC handbook, timesheets etc. and as result of these sessions, PCC was able to gather more information on individual rosters.

8. The contingency team are developing 4 week rosters for all transferred staff.

Swansea and NPT

- Daily conference calls have been in place for over 2 weeks, as a result of the concerns all 3 councils had over Alpha/Bryce care on issues of safeguarding and financial viability.
- NPT withdrew their individual service contracts on 1 April based on their financial viability assessment and not as a result of any actions that PCC had taken, PCC did not terminate until 7 April).
- Swansea withdrew their individual service contracts on 8/9 April.
- The partnership working arrangements have proved to be invaluable and has enabled potential cross boundary risks to be mitigated.