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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HEALTH, CARE AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON WEDNESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2018

PRESENT: County Councillor G I S Williams (Chair)
County Councillors J Charlton, A Jenner, P C Pritchard, G Pugh, K M Roberts-Jones, D Rowlands, E Vaughan, A Williams, J Williams and J M Williams

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors S C Davies, D E Davies, J Gibson-Watt, H Hulme, S Lewis, MC Mackenzie and G Morgan

County Councillors R Powell (Portfolio Holder for Children's Services) and S Hayes (Portfolio Holder for Adult Services)

Officers: A Bulman (Director of Social Services) and D Johnstone (Head of Children's Services)

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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No declarations of interest were received.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIPS
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No declarations of Party Whips were received.

4.	MINUTES
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on the 1st August 2018.

It was confirmed that the process regarding the two items considered at that meeting (Integrated Family Support Service and Integrated Youth Support and Emotional Wellbeing) was due to be taken to Cabinet where the Chair would have an opportunity to present the scrutiny observations and bring to the attention of Cabinet any areas of concern that remain.

5.	CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT
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Documents:

- Children's Services Performance Report July 2018

Discussion:

- Performance in % of assessments for children within statutory timescales has declined in June and July. There had been an increase in referrals during May which can take up to 42 days to compete. This increase led to capacity issues together with sickness in the assessment team in north Powys, and the failure to meet the timescales is showing in the June and July figures. August figures are expected to see an improvement but there may be an increase in demand when children go back to school and there may also be an increase after the next CIW Inspection

- 18 of the 30 overdue assessments were in the north and of these 17 were assessments were completed less than a week out of time. The service need to consider a staffing structure that allows for staff to be moved to support areas experiencing pressure
- There is a national problem recruiting and retaining staff which is particularly acute in Powys. Demand is being met by using agency staff but retaining staff is a constant challenge.
- At present the staffing structure is over establishment in response to the inspection. A new staffing structure will be implemented when the new Head of Service is in post and work is being undertaken to assess what the correct staffing complement should be
- With a high number of agency staff the workforce will be vulnerable to change as staff get better offers elsewhere. It is not just money which will keep staff in post. Social work staff appreciate working in a safe environment with supportive managers, have appropriate caseloads and get good supervision
- There is an authority wide concern that the county is suffering from a dramatic depopulation of the working age population. It is difficult for all sectors including agencies to recruit
- The recruitment package offered to social workers is the same offered to all staff across Powys. A relocation package is offered to staff who have to move to take up the post. The lease car scheme is cost neutral to the local authority. The package on offer is fairly standard across Welsh authorities
- Members outlined how they had undertaken visits to local teams and suggested closer working with colleges to encourage retention of local students
- A local Councillor drew to the attention of Members a local issue regarding how different departments work together
- The reporting of visits to Looked After Children needs to be amended to reflect that these visits are undertaken initially on a six weekly basis and after 12 months on a three monthly basis. This will record the number of visits to LAC undertaken against the number of visits that were due. It is also essential that the visits are timely, happen more frequently if required and are of good quality
- Consideration should be given to prevent the situation where reported information for one month changes subsequently to allow full confidence in the data presented
- The costs of placements has remained broadly static. A resources panel has been introduced and the service are moving to a central commissioning model to ensure the most appropriate and cost effective placements are commissioned
- Looked After Children will not be moved from appropriate placements but every effort will be made in the future to place children in the most appropriate placements as close to their home area as possible. Ultimately the decision is made on care grounds
- There are too many approaches to Children's Services resulting in a Strategy Discussion and approximately half of these have been found to be unnecessary. A review on decision-making regarding strategy discussion is being undertaken

- There are a number of residential homes in Powys but at present no children are placed in these homes. The potential to use these homes where appropriate for Looked After Children needs to be considered
- It was confirmed that Child Protection visits should take place every 10 days and if the child is not seen then the visit is rearranged. No children on the child protection register have not been seen in a month
- There are 22 children waiting adoption in Powys but there are delays in the process as there is a shortage of adoptive parents across Wales
- Some childcare cases can be particularly distressing for staff and supervision can be an opportunity to talk through issues although it was confirmed that there was no specific counselling support for staff working on children's cases over and above the offer to all Council employees.
- It was confirmed that transient families are treated in the same way as settled families in the county
- Sickness levels should be included in the performance report
- Calls were still being reported as unanswered in Powys People Direct

6.	ADULT SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT
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Documents:

- Adult Services Performance reports June and July 2018

Discussion:

- The Committee was pleased to note that there were five social work trainees within the service with another one to start training this year
- Discussions are ongoing with universities regarding training for Occupational Therapists and funds are available for one trainee OT post
- The Cabinet had previously considered the additional costs of providing a service in a rural area and officers were asked if further work was being undertaken in this regard. Costs are not always clear. Care workers have been brought in from across the border and accommodation costs are met for those staff.
- Powys People Direct (PPD) was continuing to receive inappropriate referrals and these figures were reflected within the performance report. The service is improving slowly but it is to be redesigned and launched early in the new year. Discussions with libraries and leisure centres are ongoing regarding improving accessibility to Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA). If IAA is to be provided within communities, PPD, or its successor, can deliver a more specialised service. IAA is a requirement of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act to support people to make their own decisions. Additional resource will be provided as will training for library and leisure services staff.
- PAVO and the Council provide the Info Engine service which has been very successful with more hits than any other local authority. Information Engine and Dewis had not been able to share information but the Authority have funded research and programming and now each programme includes all of the information of each site. Members noted the difficulties of parking at some locations and asked whether some sites could be reserved for those wishing to access IAA – the Head of Transformation agreed to discuss the matter with the Head of Leisure and Recreation.

- Dewis had been launched at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show. Info Engine was run and promoted by PAVO. Members suggested greater publicity for these services and asked whether they could be included within the Powys County Council website. This already happens with Children's Services and Adults Services are looking to do the same
- Sickness absence is recorded within the Adults Performance report but not in the Children's Services report – consistency of reporting across the service as a whole was needed
- There had been significant improvements since the CIW Inspection although it was acknowledged that further work was needed
- There remained concerns regarding the Active Officer (providing an assessment in Welsh where possible). This is a new statistic and the figures reported were not correct – discussions with Business Intelligence regarding this measure will show an improvement in the performance data for August. It was confirmed that the Active Offer only applies to the Welsh language. Records regarding the linguistic ability of staff have increased from 65% to 95%. Members were aware that there was a Welsh Language Champion and asked who that person was. It was confirmed that the Welsh Language Champion was Dylan Owen, Head of Transformation.
- Members asked whether assessments undertaken in Welsh were recorded in Welsh? Currently, assessments are recorded in English and translated if the client requires a copy. However, there are issues of translation. A national working group led by the Welsh Government is considering the issue of how bilingual records can be maintained.
- Where a client requires service in another language, including British Sign Language, the process of obtaining an interpreter has been improved
- Whilst the number of carers offered an assessment is high, the question of identification of carers remains an issue.
- Statistics show how the length of time between assessment to provision and although this is improving it hides individuals who are waiting a longer time for service. In August the average waiting time was 30 days, however, two clients had been waiting for more than 100 days as it is proving difficult to provide service in their particular areas. Officers monitor the anomalies which may be hidden by averaging statistics.
- There are no assessments outstanding for Social Workers but there are clients waiting for OT or sensory impairment assessments. Four clients are waiting for a social worker for younger disability assessment, but this is classed as a normal workload.
- Members were of the opinion that the service was in a more positive position than Children's Services. Trends were heading in the right direction.
- Some measures did not have targets against them and Members asked when these will be included. Targets will be included where appropriate although the Head of Transformation noted that targets could lead to perverse behaviours and he would hope that the service was looking to improve at all levels.
- It was noted that the service was forecasting an underspend at year end – Members sought clarity as to whether this was an underspend or savings. Officers informed the Committee that it was a mixture of the two. There had also been an increase in funding for the year which had not been required to be drawn down. However, there would be a standstill budget

- next year and pressures would still have to be met. The way in which the services works is changing but it is a slow process to change cultures.
- There was a long list of improvements and Members asked how these were prioritised – all actions were contained within the Improvement Plan. This was available on the intranet and could be brought to a future Committee for a more detailed discussion.
 - It was noted that the service categorised clients at age 75+ but the Health Authority work to a lower average age range and differentiate over 85s. When considering discharging clients from hospital to home, different processes were in place with different health authorities. The inconsistency of processes was acknowledged and there were challenging issues in some areas. One of the primary factors in when a client can be discharged from hospital is the availability of care.

County Councillor K Roberts-Jones left the meeting at 12.35

- There were some measures which did not include figures – this may be due to a measure being an annual one or that the figure was zero – if it is zero, then this should be recorded as such and not left blank.
- The Committee asked how quality assurance was measured – a QA Manager was appointed in April 2018. Audits are now being undertaken. The Improvement and Assurance Board had had similar concerns and a briefing had been prepared for them which would be useful for the Committee.
- Each service has a Finance Resource Model (FRM) and the Adults FRM had suggested that there would be significant pressures in the next financial year. The forecast has been altered and the FRM is under review. Savings will have to be made to meet pressures.
- A Winter Plan is required by the Welsh Government and has been prepared
- A survey of carers is undertaken by CREDU. Contract monitoring meetings take place with CREDU quarterly – their satisfaction rating is very high. Further information on this function can be provided to Members.

7.	ACCESS TO INFORMATION
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RESOLVED to exclude the public for the following item of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under category 3 of The Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007).

8.	IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE BOARD
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Documents:

- Notes of the Improvement and Assurance Board, 27 June 2018

Discussion:

- Members expressed concern that the notes were now out of date
- Consideration should be given to an oral update to scrutiny meetings to ensure that the most up to date information was available

9.	WORK PROGRAMME
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Documents:

- Scrutiny Work Programme as at 4 September 2018

Discussion:

- It was noted that the Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs Steering Committee had agreed items for inclusion on the work programme at their meeting on 11 September 2018 – the work programme would be revised and uploaded to the intranet.

Outcome:

- The work programme was noted

10.	CORRESPONDENCE
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There were no items of correspondence.

County Councillor GIS Williams
Chair