

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HEALTH AND CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD BY ZOOM ON FRIDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**PRESENT**

County Councillor A Jenner (Chair)

**County Councillors:**

G E Jones, L Rijnenberg, C Robinson, E Roderick and C Walsh

**Cabinet Members in attendance:**

County Councillor S Cox (Cabinet Member for a Caring Powys)

**Officers in attendance:**

Rachel Evans (Head of Commissioning and Partnerships), Sharon Frewin (Head of Adult Services), Catherine James (Head of Transformation and Democratic Services), James Langridge-Thomas (Deputy-Head of Transformation and Communication), Sharon Powell (Head of Children's Services) and Rachel Ysart (Strategic Business and Programme Manager)

<b>1. APOLOGIES</b>
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Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Heulwen Hulme, Little Brighthouse, Benjamin Breeze, Elwyn Vaughan, Josie Ewing, Sandra Davies (Cabinet Member for Future Generations), Jack Straw (Chief Executive Officer), Nina Davies (Director of Social Services and Housing) and Lynette Lovell (Director of Education and Children).

<b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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There were no Declarations of Interest from Members relating to items to be considered on the agenda.

<b>3. DISCLOSURE OF PARTY WHIPS</b>
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The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member had been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

<b>4. Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT</b>
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**Documents Considered:**

- Q1 Performance Report (to Cabinet and Scrutiny)

**Background:**

- The purpose of the report was to present the Council's 2023 to 2024 Quarter 1 (April to June) Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan Scorecard. The report was the first presentation of the Council's progress against the new Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan.

- The Scorecard had been made available on the Council's website: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/14124/Corporate-Plan-Updates>
- The Quarter 1 Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan Scorecard showed the Council's performance against its expectations between April and June 2023.
- The new performance year commenced on 01 April 2023 to coincide with the publication of the Council's new Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan: Stronger, Fairer, Greener (abbreviated as 'CSEP').
- The purpose of the CSEP was to present the well-being priorities for the Council for the years 2023 to 2027, which supported the seven national well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Council's priorities were its three corporate well-being objectives, which were:
  1. We will improve people's awareness of services, and how to access them, so that they can make informed choices.
  2. We will support good quality, sustainable, employment, providing training opportunities, and pursuing real living wage employer accreditation.
  3. We will work to tackle poverty and inequality to support the well-being of the people of Powys.
- The CSEP contained all the priority work for the Council, driven by the Cabinet's work programme and ambitions. The objectives and measures integrate the equality objectives and measures to ensure that the Council worked towards a fairer Powys in all aspects of work, and that equality is at the heart of the approach taken.
- The well-being objectives were organisation-wide areas of focus that were actively pursued so that the Council can make positive improvements to services. The performance process helped the Council to reflect on the year so far, to evaluate its approaches and contributions, to consider what has been learned, and to plan what actions can or should be taken to support ongoing progress.
- Each service had provided a written update about how they had contributed towards the achievement of the Council's three corporate objectives and, where appropriate, the supporting measures.
- The new reporting system only provided the following options for identifying progress against a measure target:
  - On track
  - Off track
  - No data (data not due to be reported)
  - Not reported (data unexpectedly unavailable or not yet provided)
- Importantly, measure statuses were automatically calculated by the system as an indicator to identify whether the progress towards the activity met planned expectations (the targets). These statuses were used as conversation starts to enable activities to be considered in a more detailed context to determine what went well, where more or different support or resource may be necessary, and what lessons may be learned.

**Issues Raised by the Committee and Responses Received:**

<b>Issues Raised by the Committee:</b>	<b>Responses Received:</b>
<p>I understand why the quarterly reporting used percentages, however could the raw figures be included also, to aid in understanding what the target would be?</p>	<p>The Member's points would be considered.</p>
<p>Referring to the number of apprentices who have started working for the Council in the last quarter (3), does this figure include schools?</p> <p>The Chair asked for clarification as to whether the figure included all, or only new apprentices for the previous quarter.</p> <p><b>Recommendation to include current apprentices in the scorecard, alongside new apprentices within the last quarter.</b></p>	<p>The figure was specific to Social Services, however the report allows filtering for each Service.</p> <p>The Head of Commissioning and Partnerships noted that there were eight apprentices within Childcare settings in total, and questioned whether the scorecard was only displaying new apprentices for quarter 1.</p>
<p>Regarding Objective 3, the amount of rental income lost was referred to as a percentage, how can we find the amount rather than the percentage?</p>	<p>The amount of rental income lost should be included in the Service's written narrative.</p>
<p>Regarding the new partnership being formed between the Preventative and Restorative Justice Team and Freedom Leisure to support families, is information available to explain why this was specific to the Llandrindod Wells area? Was any work completed in other areas of Powys where Freedom Leisure also operates?</p>	<p>The Head of Transformation and Democratic Services did not have further information relating to the question, although noted that the Service could be requested to provide the information.</p>
<p>Noted that for the first quarter, it was difficult to make comparisons and identify trends. However moving forward, this will be a useful tool to use alongside the commentary from Service Areas, which provides context and aids understanding and insight into the CSEP Objectives.</p>	
<p>The report mentioned that three measures were underperforming, what</p>	<p>Response from SP, some families step down and receive help from</p>

<p>actions were Services taking to bring these measures up to target?</p> <p>For example, one of the measures, 'The percentage of children using the Intervention and Prevention Service' remains at 89%, with the target being 91%.</p>	<p>services such as the Early Help or Youth Justice team. It appears as a deficit, it would be beneficial to be able to compare to these, so the data capture would need to be there to show on the quarterly performance scorecards.</p> <p>The Chair noted that this was one of the reasons why the performance reports and operational data were requested, as more service-specific information would give the Committee a better picture of the situation.</p> <p>The Head of Children's Services firstly agreed that the Scorecard should include the actual number in addition to the percentage. Regarding the percentage, when measuring the intervention for a particular child and family, the support does not always end in the Intervention and Prevention Service, due to them receiving support from the Early Help Team, or receive intervention from the Youth Justice Team.</p> <p>Although it was reported as a deficit, this does not specifically mean that children and families did not receive an intervention from another service within Children's Services.</p>
<p>Do you think that you have set particularly challenging targets?</p>	<p>Potentially, when looking at the end of quarter one, the Service were striving to meet their targets, although the Head of Children's Services noted that work needed to be undertaken regarding how the support families receive was being reported.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> - Following the request from the Chair, the Head of Children's Services agreed to provide the monthly performance reports from April 2023.</p>
<p>Regarding WCCIS issues, did the Head of Children's Services have concerns on potential impacts on reporting performance, for example due to issues</p>	<p>The Head of Children's Services noted that there are complications with WCCIS as a system, there are plans to replace it in the future.</p>

<p>with extracting data?</p> <p>Do you have any concerns with WCCIS around managing risk?</p>	<p>However, it is not impacting on the reporting of the data contained within the Quarterly Performance reporting.</p> <p>The Head of Children’s Services noted that she does not have any concerns regarding the management of risk, if there were complications with the system, the information is well-sighted, and the Head of Service is aware.</p> <p>Regardless of the system, children can still be seen by officers. There are sometimes complications with recording information in a timely manner, although this does not have an impact on risk.</p>
<p>Regarding Objective 2 – Supporting the Workforce, when the WCCIS system was not working properly, I would imagine staff are frustrated and impacted by this, has the situation improved?</p> <p>Are the Data Quality clerks’ role designed to support staff?</p>	<p>Through engagement with the workforce, for example the regular Social Services Staff Roadshows, WCCIS issues are regular frustrations of staff, however the system had been working better in recent weeks.</p> <p>Most staff members would likely say that WCCIS issues are continuing to cause frustrations, especially when a social worker needs to input information into the system, and it is not working. In these circumstances, staff would need to record the information on a Word document.</p> <p>There are dedicated Data Quality Clerks and Co-ordinating officers who monitor the data being inputted into WCCIS, this also aids in lessening the frustrations of social workers. There are therefore several mechanisms to work with staff on the areas which cause repeated frustration.</p> <p>Yes, their roles are focused on the collection and input of data into the system, which allows the social workers and other staff to be more available in their practice when the system is not fully working.</p>
<p>The ongoing work on replacing WCCIS was due to be presented to the</p>	<p>The Head of Adult Services noted that conversations were underway,</p>

<p>Committee, was this still due to happen?</p> <p>The Chair noted that further debate may reveal commercially confidential information and noted that confidential updates to the Committee could be undertaken.</p>	<p>although specific updates could not yet be provided.</p>
<p>Closing the item, the Chair thanked the Head of Transformation and Democratic Services and the Deputy-Head of Transformation and Communication for presenting the Quarter 1 Performance Report.</p>	

**Actions:**

- The Chair requested that the monthly Children’s Services performance/KPI reports be made available to the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee’s Teams channel to review, and to ask any supplementary questions following the scrutiny of the Q1 Performance report item.

**Observations and Recommendations:**

- Overall recommendation that the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee be provided with the monthly performance/KPI report for each Service, to enable the Committee to drill-down further when scrutinising the corporate quarterly performance report.

<b>5.</b>	<b>STAFFING AND SICKNESS TRENDS</b>
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**Documents Considered:**

- Verbal updates from the Head of Adult Services regarding Q1 staffing and sickness trends.

**Background:**

- The Quarter 1 Performance Summary provided an update on:
  - Sickness Summary – Percentage of workforce absent due to sickness (01/04/2023 – 30/06/2023)
  - Long-term sickness absence (LTSA) for Quarter 1
  - Short Term Sickness Absence (STSA)
  - Number of occurrences over previous 6 months (01/01/2023 – 30/06/2023)
    - Quarter 1 had seen a reduction in both occurrences and working days lost compared with Quarter 4. The number of staff absent due to long-term sickness absence had fallen each month during Quarter 1. However, long-term sickness absence (exceeding 28 days) continues to be significant. It was reported that managers were conscious of the subsequent impact on the Authority in relation to budgets, ability to deliver services and impact on colleagues in work.

- It was noted that Team Managers within Adult Services had support and training in managing sickness absence, including 1-2-1 sessions with the HR Advisor.
- Workforce data summary
  - The headcount as of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023 was 547, equivalent to 460.29 FTE.
  - The headcount as of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023 was 552, equivalent to 464.79 FTE.
  - The headcount as of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 was 554, equivalent to 469.54 FTE.
    - During Quarter 1, there had been 10 PCC leavers compared to 16 during Quarter 4, with no qualified leavers in Quarter 1, which accounted for 12.5% of the leavers during the previous Quarter 4.
- Exit interviews had been offered to all leavers, and information from the interviews was feedback to the Service to act upon where appropriate. It was noted that exit interviews for Social Worker Qualified leavers were undertaken by Senior Managers and HR.
- 10 new starters had successfully commenced in post during Quarter 1, which was the same number as Quarter 4.

**Issues Raised by the Committee and Responses Received:**

<b>Issues Raised by the Committee:</b>	<b>Responses Received:</b>
Where would work related stress be recorded in the data?	There are two columns in the data table, as work related and non-work related stress are recorded separately.
<p>Noted that the downward trend in sickness absence was a positive development. The first table was slightly confusing as the Head of Adult Services reported that the sickness rate was 25%, whereas it was 25% of staff who had a period of sickness within the quarter. Could we have a percentage of the working days lost, rather than percentage absence?</p> <p>Has the improvement in sickness affected the budget, are less agency staff being employed?</p>	<p>This could be included in the future performance reporting.</p> <p>There were more agency staff being employed due to additional funding being made available from different streams to support the transformation process. The Head of Services would need to check the impact on the budget due to the additional funding. It was noted that as a result, there was more staff time being spent with clients.</p> <p><b>Action</b> – to revisit the impact on the Adult Services budget when scrutinising the quarterly finance performance.</p>

<p>How do the figures provided compare to the pre-Covid period, especially relating to stress-related sickness? Were there issues due to staff not being available at offices? It had been previously noted at a Council meeting that due to changes in working patterns and the ability to work from home, work-life balance had improved.</p> <p>The Chair added to the question that the Committee had previously discussed whether a deeper investigation was required into staff wellbeing when working remotely, for example, was there evidence suggesting that staff were feeling isolated and not sharing worries?</p>	<p>The Head of Adult Services noted that she did not have the information available and was not in post at the time.</p> <p>The Head of Adult Services noted that staff had raised a mixture of points at the regular roadshows and team meetings. It was reported that staff wanted to retain the ability to work from home when needed, although they are also enjoying the return to the office. The Head of Adult Services noted that team meetings and supervisions should be face-to-face wherever possible, or available in the office on certain agreed days.</p> <p>It was reported that there had not been an increase in requests for flexible working to condense hours for example, although these were still available, and it was noted that this was often due to life changes.</p>
<p>The Chair noted that when working from home, it can be considered more acceptable to work even when staff are unwell. However, this could increase the length of illness due to the staff not resting. Would this then affect the workforce overall, due to the risk of staff burnout?</p>	<p>The Head of Adult Services noted that the Service do have those conversations to ensure that staff are resting and not working from home.</p> <p>The Head of Commissioning and Partnerships noted that the Social Services staff roadshows were very useful to meet with staff, however under the New Ways of Working policy, people are still able to come into the office to meet face-to-face to share any problems they are experiencing.</p> <p>It was further noted that protected lunch breaks, not booking meetings as a principle on Friday's, taking regular breaks from screens, to reflect and exercise was important, according to the Wellbeing Protocol. This protocol was reinforced during regular 1-2-1s, supervisions and team meetings.</p> <p>In respect of the Commissioning Team,</p>



	<p>the Head of Commissioning and Partnerships noted that due to most staff working remotely, there had been cases where staff were working from home when unwell. Conversations had been undertaken to ensure staff do not work from home when unwell to ensure a full recover.</p>
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**Actions:**

- To revisit the impact of agency staffing on the Adult Services budget when scrutinising the quarterly finance performance.

**Documents Considered:**

- Verbal updates from the Head of Children's Services regarding Q1 staffing and sickness trends.

**Background:**

- The Quarter 1 Staff Sickness Trends for Children's Services provided an update on:
  - Long-term sickness absence (LTSA)
  - Short-term sickness absence (STSA)
  - All sickness absence reasons by month (April, May and June 2023):
    - For June 2023, the reasons with the highest rate of absence were 'test/treatment', 'stress, depression, anxiety etc.' and 'pregnancy related'.
    - For May 2023, the reason with the highest rate of absence was 'test/treatment'.
    - For April 2023, the reason with the highest rate of absence was 'stress, depression, anxiety etc.'
      - The Head of Children's Services noted that HR record the reasons of stress/mental health between work-related and non-work related sickness absences.
    - The number of absence occurrences over the previous 12 months (01/07/2022 to 30/06/2023) were:
      - 2 occurrences – 54 employees,
      - 3+ occurrences – 45 employees.
  - Employee starter and leaver rates:
    - The Head of Children's Services noted that the rates of employees who started with (starters), and left (leavers) Children's Services changed each month between the June 2022 to June 2023 reporting period.
      - The highest rate of leavers was seen in August 2022 at 7.3.
      - The lowest rate of leavers was seen in May 2023 at 1.0.

- The highest rate of starters was seen in March 2023 at 9.6.
- The lowest rate of starters was seen in December 2022 and January 2023 at 2.0.
- The Head of Children’s Services reported that the spike in starters during March 2023 (9.6) was due to the recruitment drive held across December 2022 and January 2023, to recruit staff into the Council’s Children’s Residential Homes.
- It was further reported that the leaver rate had stabilised, whilst starter rates had increased, with the focus being on retention of staff by strengthening wellbeing and a positive work culture, in addition to professional development.
- Support from a psychologist was offered to staff, in addition to group sessions to reflect on complex situations.
- These developments were recognised by Social Care Wales.
- Agency workers:
  - From June 2022 to June 2023, the number of agency workers in Children’s Services ranged from 24 to 32 per month, with the peak of 32 having occurred during October 2022. In more recent months the number has stabilised at 29 agency workers for June 2023.
  - The Head of Children’s Services noted that the aim was to reduce the reliance on agency workers through the ‘Grow Our Own’ social worker scheme to provide financial sustainability, stability and permanency to the workforce, however it was clarified that agency workers were valuable and played an important role.
  - Children’s Services were subsequently focusing on managing the transition of newly-qualified social workers whilst some of the agency workers leave the Service.
  - It was further noted by the Head of Children’s Services that more agency workers were showing interest in converting to permanent roles.

**Issues Raised by the Committee and Responses Received:**

<b>Issues Raised by the Committee:</b>	<b>Responses Received:</b>
How do staff notify line managers of their sickness?	The Head of Children’s Services reported that the sickness absence policy states that the employee must verbally notify their line manager which would be recorded.
What is the timeframe for being able to self-certify?	The Head of Children’s Services explained that employees may self-certify for up to seven days, where sickness absence exceeds seven days, a return-to-work interview is undertaken and recorded by the supervisor/line manager.

<p>When staff fill in the self-certification sickness form, for example for gastroenteritis, at what stage do managers further investigate the sickness absence to consider other root-causes such as wellbeing and mental health issues?</p>	<p>If there were reoccurring themes, conversations could start which may involve an occupational health assessment, or a counselling referral.</p> <p>The Head of Adult Services noted that supervisors maintained regular contact with staff who were absent due to sickness, which ranged between weekly to no-less than fortnightly contact. Reasonable adjustments and other support could then be discussed to enable the employee to return to work.</p>
<p>Could future Children’s Services staffing reports include the headcount of FTE, as was reported in the Adult Services data?</p>	<p>Yes, we will include this in future reporting.</p>
<p>Could a flu vaccination drive be implemented as is done in the Health Board, as flu-related illnesses can become heightened during the Winter months.</p>	<p>The Head of Children’s Services noted that social care staff had the opportunity to receive a Covid booster vaccine which was shortly due to begin.</p> <p>The Head of Adult Services noted that in other local authorities, the offer of a flu vaccine did lead to a reduction in the number of flu-related absences. Both Heads of Service agreed to discuss how a flu vaccine could be offered to PCC social care staff.</p>
<p>Could staffing and sickness reporting use the same reporting format, or be combined for Adult and Children’s Services?</p>	<p>The Head of Children’s Services noted that she would liaise with the Head of Adult Services to standardise their staffing and sickness reporting.</p>
<p>Do you anticipate that staffing and sickness will be affected as a result of planned management of change within social services? Was engagement with staff undertaken regarding co-production of services?</p> <p>The Chair added that where future changes to services and transformation was planned, staff may have concerns around how the changes could affect their position. How could sickness absence, for example due to work-related stress be captured due to changes to service arrangements?</p>	<p>Regarding management of change and reshaping of services, the Head of Children’s Services offered to provide a report to the Committee regarding the future shaping of services.</p> <p>Children’s Services have utilised engagement roadshows for staff to develop Sustainable Powys, it was not anticipated that any radical changes would be undertaken within Children’s Services. Rather, changes were about strengthening the work already ongoing. This included the ‘Grow Our Own’ social worker programme, and to reduce the reliance on agency staff.</p>

	<p>The Head of Children’s Services noted that she had been clear to staff within the service through engagement, that work was to be strengthened, rather than drastically changed.</p> <p>Surveys had been undertaken, alongside joint surveys with Powys Teaching Health Board. A summary could be reported to the Committee in future. The Head of Children’s Services further noted that she attended team meetings regularly to find solutions with staff where they have worries due to emerging trends within the Service.</p>
<p>Was there a reason why the WTE showed an upward trend around August 2022?</p>	<p>The Head of Children’s Services noted that the change in WTE may be due to the exit of a managed team known as ‘Innovate’, however it was noted that she was not in post at that time.</p> <p>The Strategic Business and Programme Manager noted that it was likely due to the exit of the managed team.</p>
<p>Regarding the number of social worker vacancies, which averaged around 25 for the quarter. In terms of the agency being used, were they solely being utilised to fill these vacancies?</p> <p>Agency workers tend to cost the Council more, was the use of agency workers having an effect on the budget?</p>	<p>Yes, the agency rates were equivalent to the social worker vacancies, however there were one or two additional agency social workers to increase the capacity due to the demand in cases entering through the ‘Front Door’.</p> <p>The costs do vary due to the cost of an agency worker per day being considerably higher compared to the cost of a full-time-equivalent permanent employee.</p> <p>There was a deficit in terms of the staffing budget due to the use of agency worker expenditure. The ‘Grow Our Own’ programme supports the reduction in use of agency workers.</p>
<p>How was benchmarking managed by the Services, was data from other Local Authorities utilised in addition to professional experience?</p>	<p>The Head of Adult Services noted that benchmarking was undertaken by comparing data with other authorities in addition to professional experience. Regarding absences, it was noted that incident/accident rates were analysed to</p>

<p>The Chair asked the Head of Adult Services what actions would be undertaken based on the monthly performance reporting.</p> <p>Would you also expect the dialogue to be instigated from the individual teams upwards to senior management? Does this happen freely or do you need to push for it?</p>	<p>identify any trends.</p> <p>In addition to conversations with equivalent officers in other Authorities, cross-referencing data from monthly and previous years' reporting to identify any trend. It was further noted that supervision of specific teams was paramount, especially when there were differences across the county, to establish the reason for the irregularity.</p> <p>Conversations would be undertaken with the specific team, in addition to analysing the data to identify any trends where applicable, where this was identified a different support mechanism would be considered.</p> <p>As part of the supervision process, sickness, demand and performance was a standard item for discussion. The Head of Adult Services reported the positive and proactive nature in how managers were undertaking sickness absence management. It was further noted that this happened freely in team meetings.</p> <p>The Head of Children's Services noted that this was also applicable to Children's Services, however it was reported that vacancy rates were scrutinised on a regional basis with other Heads of Children's Services in other local authorities.</p> <p>Likewise, this was undertaken as a national objective at the All-Wales Heads of Children's Services group, where there is a national drive to reduce the use of agency workers which involves benchmarking with other local authorities. Benchmarking enabled a greater understanding of the specific reasons why certain local authorities were experiencing problems whereas others did not.</p>
<p>Where does the Portfolio Holder for a Caring Powys see her role in terms of oversight, was data available through the WLGA (Welsh Local Government Association)?</p>	<p>The Portfolio Holder for a Caring Powys was not aware of conversations with the WLGA regarding benchmarking and sickness specifically, however this could be raised with the WLGA. The Portfolio</p>

<p>The Chair noted that she did not want to create work for others, however if the data was held it would be interesting to compare against other Local Authorities.</p>	<p>Holder reported that she did have conversations between Heads of Service to discuss sickness absences.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder agreed and further noted the analysis of the workforce futures survey to understand how PCC staff wellbeing compares to PTHB (Powys Teaching Health Board).</p>
<p>Regarding Care First, was the offer changing, has it been adapted post-Covid and who provides the quality-control?</p> <p>The Chair asked whether there was a cost associated with these services, although it was noted that Human Resources may need to provide this information.</p>	<p>The Head of Children’s Services noted that Human Resources oversee Care First. It was noted that the offer had developed since the pandemic including more opportunity for different types of counselling.</p> <p>The Head of Adult Services noted that data was available reflecting the waiting times and referrals to Care First.</p> <p>The Head of Children’s Services noted that the Head of Workforce and Organisational Development should be able to provide the costing information.</p> <p>The Head of Children’s Services further noted that there was work ongoing within Workforce relating to recruitment and retention.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> – Recommendation to write to the Head of Workforce and Organisational Development regarding the cost of Care First services to the Council, and to provide clarity as to how the service was measured for quality.</p>
<p>Was it possible for managers to see which staff were not able to take their annual leave allowance?</p>	<p>It was possible. The Head of Adult Services noted that managers were being reminded to encourage and enable staff to take their leave.</p> <p>The Head of Commissioning and Partnerships noted that the supervision process was important to ensure staff were resting by using their annual leave, and also to ensure that leave was taken appropriately so there were not large periods where multiple officers were on leave.</p>

<p>When did the in-house psychologist start working for the Council?</p> <p>The Chair noted her experience as a member of the Foster Panel in the past, which involved a series of traumatic cases which were reported on by national news sources. The Chair had spoken to social workers who had been involved in those cases to understand the support they received, and it was confirmed they did not receive support.</p> <p>Would the answer be different now and do managers ensure that staff are actively supported in their roles?</p>	<p>The Head of Children’s Services noted that the psychologist had been post for at least two years, however the Head of Children’s Services noted that she did not have the exact figure.</p> <p>The Heads of Service ensure that staff who are involved in very serious cases can access the support from the psychologist, whether this is on an individual, group or team basis. It was noted that debriefing techniques were vital to support staff.</p> <p>The Head of Children’s Services further explained that trauma-informed practice and ways of working were necessary to support staff, not only for specific services but also the wider workforce across the Council.</p>
<p>Regarding agency staff who were converting to permanent employees of PCC, how do you capture the reasoning for why they are staying, could this good practice be shared with other teams?</p>	<p>The Head of Children’s Services noted that whilst the Service do record the number of agency staff who convert to work permanently for the Authority, the reasons were not specifically recorded. It was reported that agency staff had noted the culture of working for PCC in addition to the residents.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> - The Chair recommended that the reasons for agency staff who were converting to permanent roles should be specifically identified, to understand the good practice which should be shared across teams, which may further encourage other agency staff to convert to a permanent role.</p> <p>The Head of Adult Services noted that there can be circumstances where there are fees incurred to the Council when agency workers convert to being employed by PCC, therefore a robust business case was required.</p>
<p>Was there a particular reason why it was difficult to recruit social workers to Children’s Services compared to Adult Services?</p>	<p>The Head of Children’s Services noted that previously there were around 55 agency social workers working for Children’s Services, the impact was likely</p>

	<p>due to the poor inspection outcome by Care Inspectorate Wales in 2017. There was an effect on Adult Services too, however Children's Services was predominantly affected as seen by the increased rate of staff leaving the Service.</p> <p>The Service was still reliant on agency staff and whilst there was a downward trend in use of agency staff, the Service recognised that a different approach was necessary to attract and retain staff by building from within. The Head of Children's Services noted that there was greater scrutiny of social workers who work with children, especially in the media and courts.</p> <p>It was reported that there is a national shortage of social workers, although the shortage was especially prevalent for social workers who work in front-line children's services, safeguarding and child protection due to the nature of the roles. The Head of Children's Services stressed that maintaining staff wellbeing was therefore very important.</p> <p>It was further noted that there were so many career opportunities for young people to explore with some being more popular than others, whereas social work as a profession requires a person who is passionate and prepared for the profession. For Powys specifically, an ageing population with less young people would likely narrow the number of people who want to pursue social work.</p>
	<p>The Head of Commissioning and Partnerships noted that a recent Commissioning Team away day found that staff valued being able to provide a better future for their family first, followed by work-life balance, to learn new skills and being paid well. These factors would then inform future recruitment.</p>

**Actions:**

- To include a headcount of FTE across the quarter for future reporting.

**Observations and Recommendations:**



- Recommended that the Committee write to the Head of Workforce and Organisational Development regarding Care First and tracking the Agency Costs. How is the quality measured?

<b>6.</b>	<b>PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATION UPDATES</b>
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The previous recommendations were noted by the Committee.

<b>7.</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATION TRACKER</b>
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The Committee reviewed the Informal Recommendation Tracker and noted the completed actions and recommendations.

The two recommendations made during the meeting were recorded to ensure that a timely response from Officers was received by the Committee.

The formal recommendations relating to the scrutiny of the Quarter 1 Performance Report were recorded in the Formal Recommendation Tracker. A report would be considered by the Cabinet on 19 September 2023, to either accept, partially accept or not accept each of the Committee's recommendations.

According to the Council's Constitution, a formal response from the Cabinet and relevant Cabinet Member should be received by the Committee within two months of the report being considered at the Cabinet meeting.

<b>8.</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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The Committee noted the Work Programme and resolved to review it again at the next meeting.

**County Councillor A Jenner (Chair)**