

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 OCTOBER 2022

Present: Councillor Molik(Chairperson)
Councillors Ash-Edwards, Boes, Lewis and McGarry

10 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Lent and Principal Scrutiny Officer Naomi Tomic.

11 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Molik declared a personal interest in Item 5 and a prejudicial interest in Item 6.
Cllr McGarry declared a personal interest in Item 6.

Cllr Molik proposed that Cllr McGarry chair Item 6 and the proposal was approved.

12 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 18 July 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

13 : COMMITMENTS TO UNPAID CARERS

Members were advised that this item provided an opportunity to consider the Cardiff and Vale Partnership Board Unpaid Carers Charter and the Council's work to improve support for unpaid carers in Cardiff.

To aid the consideration the Chairperson welcomed:

- Cllr Norma Mackie, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services
- Jane Thomas, Director of Adult Housing and Communities
- Sarah McGill, Corporate Director for Social Care; and
- Cath Doman, Director of Health and Social Care Integration.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make an opening statement, in which she outlined the work done by the Regional Partnership Board made up of Cardiff and Vale councils and the Health Board along with carers to develop two new charters, setting out their commitment to improving support for unpaid carers and young unpaid carers.

Cardiff Council is already committed to improving support for unpaid carers as set out in the Ageing Well Strategy and the Children's Services Directorate Plan. The Council aims to incorporate all its plans for carers into one Action Plan setting out the steps needed to take the work forward.

More than a fifth of carers provide more than 50 hours a week of unpaid care, providing a very significant contribution to Adult Services. The Charter aims to raise the profile and awareness of carers and ensure they are aware of the support

available. The next step is to launch the Charter using multiple approaches based on engagement with and feedback from carers.

Members were invited to make comments/observations and ask questions, which are summarised as follows:

Members sought more details on how the Charter had been coproduced with unpaid carers and on follow-up arrangements to ensure it continues to meet their needs. Officers advised that during August 2019 engagement commenced with adult and young carers as well as people from across the joint workforce to develop the vision and shared priorities. Further engagement took place this year. The Unpaid Carers Board will oversee the delivery of the Charter and will continue to receive advice from carers.

Members discussed the development of workforce skills. Officers advised that workers come into contact with carers regularly and it was important to build their skills to understand carers' needs. Different levels of training are required for different members of staff as carers engage with different Council services in various ways.

Members sought additional information on plans for implementation of the Charter, the challenges anticipated in turning plans into specific action and the methods for monitoring and measuring the success of action. Officers advised that the Council will work with the Partnership to develop a way forward and ensure there are concrete plans in place. There will be one overarching Action Plan for delivery of the objectives which will be taken forward through directorates. The most difficult challenge so far encountered is in reaching and identifying carers. The Council has been working with the Carers Collective on respite grants but it has been difficult to reach the right people. Effective publicity campaigns will be crucial. Officers advised that the RPB's role is to amplify the work of the statutory organisations and ensure the message reaches as many carers as possible.

Members enquired about the timescale for delivery. Officers advised that the Charter is due to be launched in November, following which the Carers' Partnership Board will take up the detailed Action Delivery Plan, which will coordinate the activities within different organisations. The first step within Cardiff will be the Respite Survey. The Council is recruiting for a Service Manager and has recently recruited a Carers' Champion to work in the community. A comprehensive plan will be in place by the end of the financial year and will be rolled out according to priorities.

Members sought a breakdown of the main areas of care provided. Officers advised that the information could be provided to the Committee.

Members noted the low uptake of Carers' Assessment and sought an explanation of the reasons for this and how it could be tackled. Officers advised that many carers are offered Carers' Assessment but choose not to take it up as they do not see themselves as having needs. Improved communication could raise awareness of the different support available to carers with different levels of need. A review is being undertaken into whether carers' assessments should be bundled with service users' assessments.

Members sought further information on the mechanisms for gathering the views of carers and subsequently changing procedures and delivery. Officers advised that a Service Improvement Manager is being recruited to review delivery and gather feedback from carers, as well as implementing subsequent improvement to delivery. New procedures and training are anticipated. This could include training for social workers, Hub staff and first point of contact staff. The Action Plan will detail priorities for action. Carers will be involved in evaluation.

Members noted the report stated that there would be no financial implication to the Council and discussed whether any commitment to service change would be considered in the next budget. Members were advised that all things would be considered and that budgets had not been set.

Members sought an update on any interventions put in place to improve the situation in regard to respite. Officers advised that a survey was proposed initially to discover what solutions had worked well and what opportunities were currently available. A lack of sufficient planning has previously been identified and it is thought better planning could reduce costs. The Council will await the results of the survey before deciding on further action.

Members noted that 50% of carers are aged 50 and above, and asked what steps were being taken to engage with them. Officers advised that publicity would be issued to encourage carers to come forward. This would include more traditional forms of publicity in addition to use of social media. There are no specific plans for engagement with the over-50s; however, officers are willing to take on board any suggestions.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

14 : LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Committee was advised that this item enabled Members to consider the Authority's 2021/22 Social Services Annual Report prior to its consideration by the Cabinet and Council.

To aid the consideration the Chairperson welcomed:

- Cllr Norma Mackie, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services
- Jane Thomas, Director of Adult Housing and Communities; and
- Sarah McGill, Corporate Director for Social Care.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make an opening statement, in which she outlined the achievements of Adult Social Services in 2021/22 including the development of strength-based practice; approval of the Ageing Well Strategy; development of the Cardiff Cares Academy; reopening and strengthening of the Older Persons' Day Care Centres; and increased joining up of services for those with complex needs. Challenges persisting include the increase in volume and complexity

of case work; recruitment and retention of care workers and qualified social workers; and difficulties in securing placements for service users with learning difficulties.

The report also sets out priorities including commitments to implementing the Ageing Well Strategy; partnership with care providers to deliver sustainable quality care; and increasing care options available.

Members were invited to make comments/observations and ask questions, which are summarised as follows:

Members discussed the decrease in the review of care plans. Officers advised that it had been a challenging year for adult social care. Reviews were carried out when necessary rather than as normal, in line with the Covid regulations.

Members were interested to know more about how the Cabinet Member's vision for social services was being implemented. Members were advised that additional preventative measures were desirable, but it was difficult to develop them due to budgetary constraints. Nevertheless the foundations for a good preventative service were being built, and people were being supported to continue living their lives as they wish for longer.

Members sought information on the assessment and discharge of patients from UHW with the support of the Social Services team. Members were advised that Social Care had been working with the hospital to increase discharges. Work is ongoing to facilitate the transfer of people from hospital to their own homes rather than to care homes. People declared medically fit may still be vulnerable and require continued support. An integrated discharge hub has been set up at UHW to facilitate discharge into suitable care environments with appropriate support.

Members discussed progress on integrated care. Officers advised that there were good integrated partnerships with Health colleagues at every level. Most people in hospital want to return to their own homes and the Council's aim is to ensure services are in place to enable that to happen as quickly as possible. There has been good work done on increasing the amount of domiciliary care available.

Members sought further information about the level of sick leave, why some staff did not undertake return to work assessments, and whether there were any options to support people to return to work. Officers advised that the Council monitored whether sick leave was long or short term and that there is a comprehensive policy for managing sick leave. There are measures to support people including the Occupational Health service. The workforce is ageing and the work is stressful, and there are issues with recruitment. A workforce plan is being developed to attract new people into the service and address pressures suffered by existing staff. Members were advised that a small percentage of staff failed to undertake return to work assessments for a variety of reasons.

Members enquired as to whether targets for the transfer of care would be reintroduced. Officers advised that a review of figures was being undertaken.

Members sought an update on recruitment of social workers and the percentage of agency social workers employed. Officers advised that around 12% of posts were

unfilled with a particularly high level in Older Person's Services. The Council is reviewing the structures in Adult Services to address the underlying issues.

Members were advised that the Quality Assurance Manager post had been filled.

Members noted the rise in complaints and sought information on the interventions being put in place to address concerns. Officers advised that there had been a breakdown in communication with some service users, and the Council's aim was to move more quickly in carrying out assessments. The complaints policy has been reviewed to ensure complaints are promptly dealt with and feedback issued. Communication issues arose as a result of the speedy transfer of service users out of hospital last winter. Staff were being trained to ensure prompt communication.

Members sought further information on the causes of recruitment and retention pressures in the care market, and the steps the Council was undertaking to address them. Officers advised that there were various reasons for the lack of recruitment. There had been successes with the Cardiff Cares Academy; however, there is a lack of flexibility among potential recruits, and transport difficulties are also a barrier, as are low financial rewards. There is less difficulty providing domiciliary care although care providers are concerned about rising costs. The Council is considering support for self-employed carers which could work well with the development of a locality approach and independent living facilities.

Members discussed joint working with other Council services such as Housing, Education and Transport to help address recruitment and retention issues in Social Care. Officers advised there was a scheme to branch fund electric bicycles for care workers, which has been well received. The service works closely with Housing to increase provision for older people. There are also schemes to help people with learning difficulties and mental health issues move on from residential care. There are no schemes to provide housing for carers.

Members sought information on the increase in safeguarding cases. Officers advised that the Adult Safeguarding team deals with concerns raised regarding any professional. A large proportion are raised about care homes or care providers. Concerns raised around direct payment are usually where the family are involved in direct payment and care provision. Members could be provided with a breakdown of the causes if required. Officers advised that a more focused Corporate approach to monitoring referrals has been put in place to identify any need for additional training. A rise in reported cases did not necessarily indicate an increase in incidents. The need for identifying trends in safeguarding cases was discussed.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

15 : IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RENTING HOMES (WALES) ACT 2016

Cllr Molik having declared a prejudicial interest in this item, she withdrew as Chair and was replaced by Cllr McGarry.

The Committee was advised that this item was to provide Committee Members with the opportunity to be briefed on this legislation, and the Council's response.

To aid the consideration the Chairperson welcomed:

- Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities;
- Jane Thomas, Director of Adult Housing and Communities; and
- Helen Evans, Assistant Director for Housing and Communities.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make an opening statement, in which she outlined some concerns about the implications of the legislation on the private rented market.

Jane Thomas, Director of Adult Housing and Communities, provided a presentation in which she outlined some of the effects of the legislation. New Occupation Contracts have been drafted for Council tenants with additional terms already included in tenancy agreements. There are changes to joint contract conditions and enhanced succession rights, and abandoned properties can be repossessed without a court order. The notice period for rent increases rises from 1 month to 2. A new repair standard has been introduced, and contract holders will have the right to withhold rent if a property is not fit for human habitation. Standard occupation contracts will give contract holders in supported and temporary accommodation more security. Discussions are ongoing with Welsh Government over some of the difficulties that may be caused by the legislation.

The notice period private landlords are required to give will increase from 2 months to 6. There is concern landlords may choose to leave the rental market. The Council is offering to support landlords by leasing their properties.

Tenants are being supported to understand the changes. The Council is taking legal advice on the new occupation contracts for council tenants and it is recommended that finalising these is delegated to Officers in consultation with the Cabinet Member.

Members were invited to make comments/observations and ask questions, which are summarised as follows:

Members discussed the problem of persistent damp in some Council properties in relation to the new repair standard and tenants' right to withhold rent. Members were advised that persistent damp was often caused by condensation aggravated by lifestyle and a reluctance to ventilate properly. Officers are investigating an internal wall insulation system called Matilda's Blanket which may provide a solution in some cases. A video outlining steps people can take to reduce condensation will be presented on YouTube, along with a fact sheet in multiple languages. Officers have reviewed the Responsive Repairs Unit and put in additional resources.

Members enquired as to whether there had been any modelling of the implications of the legislation for Cardiff and what mitigations there might be. Officers advised that data on the number of private landlords leaving the market had been collected. Members were advised that a majority of properties are managed by a minority of

landlords. Those who own 1-2 rental properties are those more likely to leave the market. A helpline to advise landlords in difficulties is being considered.

Members enquired about the leasing scheme and sought clarification on whether landlords would be required to change their mortgage provisions to enter the scheme. Members were advised that the Welsh Government is aware of the problem and is reviewing the situation.

Members sought clarification on the other languages being used other than English and Welsh. Officers confirmed that the documents would be translated into other languages besides English and Welsh.

Members sought information on whether there were any abandoned properties within the Council's housing stock; and whether there were any properties that would be classified as not fit for human habitation and whether they would be rectified before the legislation came into force. Officers confirmed that there were abandoned properties and that the legislation would make the process of repossession easier. The Council does not have any houses unfit for human habitation unless they are undergoing repairs. Work is underway to ensure documentation is up to date regarding smoke alarms etc.

Members enquired as to whether tenants would be considered to be in arrears should they decide to withhold rent on the grounds that they deem the property uninhabitable. Officers advised that processes were in place to ensure action was taken as soon as tenants fall into arrears, and that any issues were promptly reported to the repairs service. Members were advised that the issues were likely to be greater in the private rented sector.

Members sought information on the implications for the turnaround of voids. Officers were advised that the process was likely to take longer and mean that properties would remain empty for longer periods. It is hoped that void rates overall would not be affected.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

16 : COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

The previous item being concluded, Cllr Molik returned to the Chair and invited Erica Painter to provide an update on the Committee Work Programme 2021-22.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the pre-decision scrutiny items to be considered by Members during 2022/23; and the two Task and Finish investigations around the cost-of-living crisis, and access to Adult Social Care Services for ethnic minorities.

RESOLVED: To accept the Work Programme and key areas.

17 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None were received.

18 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday 14 November 2022 at 2.30pm.

19 : CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING COMMITTEE MEETING

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairperson agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

Cllr Molik vacated the Chair in favour of Cllr McGarry during the discussion of issues arising from Item 6.

The meeting terminated at 4.30 pm