

13th Dec 2023

Councillor Norma Mackie
Cabinet Member for Adult Services
Sent via e-mail



Dear Cllr Mackie,

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 11 DEC 2023 – CARE HOME MARKET REVIEW – NON-CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

On behalf of Committee Members, a sincere thanks, to you, and everyone present, for attending our December meeting and for facilitating such interesting discussions.

Fee Setting Approach V Strategy

It was interesting to explore the rationale for the 2024/25 fee setting approach which covers a one-year period, as opposed to an overall 'Fee Setting Strategy' (as seen in 2019), which covered a three-year period. We understand the caution around setting a three-year strategy given the ongoing financial background and the financial situation that the Council is facing for 2024/25. We note the confirmation we received that when the financial context allows, we will return to a longer-term Fee Setting Strategy. We also note and welcome, the fee uplifting mechanism proposed for the Real Living Wage.

Engagement With Providers

We raised our concern around the poor response to our 2022 and 2023 Cost of Care Exercise and what this suggests in terms of our relationship with providers. In particular, there was also concern that the 2024/25 fee setting approach is subject to 'further consultation with providers' and so we sought assurance that this forthcoming consultation with providers will be effective.

We heard the consultation with providers to inform the 2024/25 fee will be via a 'straightforward survey' which is hoped, will result in better engagement. Through our discussions at the meeting, we are of the view, the paperwork and requirements requested on care providers may be relatively onerous with complicated systems and processes in place. This leads us to the view that our Cost of Care Exercise may not be fit for purpose, and so we would strongly encourage it be reviewed.

Although we note the potential resource implications of placing a mandate on care providers to engage with us, we are of the view that it should be considered over the longer term,

particularly in terms of care providers becoming approved providers on the DAPL. As such, we would encourage you to continue your discussions with Welsh Government on this matter.

Annual Uplift

Although the rationale for not providing annual uplifts to packages where the council pays above the standard fee is understood, we do hold concern regarding the numbers this would affect. We heard (at present) no annual uplifts would apply to 254 placements and we have concern surrounding the subsequent action of the care home and ultimately, the risk that poses for the individual residing in the home and future care availability.

Further, we also questioned the fairness in this approach, given all learning disabilities care home placements will receive annual uplifts even when we are paying more than the standard fee.

Provider Investment

During the meeting, there was an interesting discussion around the need for providers to be able to undertake infrastructure investment, particularly in respect of offering specialist care. It was interesting to hear that despite previous failed attempts, we will again seek funding from the Welsh Government to support capital schemes for private providers. We note Welsh Government have previously not agreed this funding; however, we sincerely hope this is a matter which in some way can be resolved given the need for specialist care provision in Cardiff.

Flexible Approach

During the meeting we heard about the National Commissioning Board's (NCB) work regarding fees being tailored to providers which seems to provide more of a flexible approach, as opposed to a blanket fee setting approach. We hope you and officers continue to work with the NCB in exploring this matter fully. In addition, it was pleasing to hear the NCB's assurance that the proposals for the future commissioning model proposed in this Cabinet Report appears positive and should assist in providing providers a degree of certainty.

As already mentioned in this letter, we as a committee, are aware that there is a lack of specialist care provision in the city. We sincerely hope that the Hybrid Model Framework proposed in this Cabinet Report will be able to significantly address this issue and can also assist with the issue of the council paying above the standard rates and supporting the development of Section 16 providers.

We thank you, and all attendees, once more for attending the meeting.
We hope you too found the discussions interesting and useful.
To confirm, no response to this letter is requested.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Taylor', is positioned above a thin horizontal line. The signature is written in a cursive style.

COUNCILLOR RHYS TAYLOR

CHAIR, COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc. Members of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

Jane Thomas, Director Adults, Housing & Communities

Angela Bourge, Operational Manager, Strategy, Performance & Resource

Maria Bell, Head of Policy, National Commissioning Board

Cardiff Council Chair of Governance & Audit

Tim Gordan, Head of Communications & External Relations

Jessica Tomlinson, Improvement Project Manager

Cabinet Office