

HOUSING & SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 18 January 2018 at 3pm in the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Darren Sanders (in the Chair)
Gemma New
Alicia Denny
Leo Madden
Steve Wemyss

23. Apologies. (AI 1)

No apologies for absence had been received.

24. Declarations of Members' Interests. (AI 2)

No interests were declared.

25. Minutes of the meetings held on 16 December and 14 November 2017. (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 14 November and 16 December 2017 be agreed as correct records.

26. Review into models of supported accommodation for people with learning difficulties and whether similar provision can be extended to others with a support need. (AI 4)

Alison Cordwell, Head of Disabilities explained that the You Trust supports people who live in a supported living environment in five shared houses in the city. The support includes help with personal care, getting to work and to appointments, meeting friends, finding groups and community resources to access. The support level varies depending on the individual's need. From two hours to 24 hours a day in shared houses.

Tim Holland Operations Director Portsmouth and Southampton explained that Dimensions UK provide support to up to 52 people with all aspects of life including cleaning, meals and getting out and about. The 14 properties they use are owned by Housing Associations or the council. They are moving towards more active support to help people achieve their desired outcomes. Referrals are made by the council.

Sam Leath, Regional Director explained that Community Integrated Care provides support for 43 people in three residency services and seven services flats that are shared accommodation. They provide the same range of support services as previously explained by Alison and Tim. Referrals are made by the council.

Lu Dash, Head of Support explained that the Aldingbourne Trust runs MAKE a social enterprise in Fratton which is open to the public. There is a café and workshop where training is provided. The trust also has a service for care

leavers. There is one property divided into two homes where care leavers learn independent living skills. Referrals are made by the Community Team.

Katheryn Slater, Operations Manager and David Green Managing Director South explained that Voyage Care supports 28 people who live in supported living accommodation that is owned by the council. It also provides approximately 100 hours per week of support outreach. Most referrals are made by the council's Care Management Team. Some people make self-referrals and some referrals are from friends. The range of care provided includes personal care and numerous life skills.

Roy Shipley, Commissioning Contracts Officer explained that he is responsible for commissioning and contracting supported living services in Portsmouth. He also manages and monitors the contracts.

Ian Chalcraft, Team Manager for Adult Services explained that the Kestrel Centre has 60 health and social care professionals working together including social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists. The team refers individuals for placements by matching their needs and wishes to the vacancies available. They also facilitate the conversation between the service user and provider and monitor the individual's outcomes.

In response to questions, the following points were clarified:

Legislation

Ian Chalcraft explained that the Care Act 2014 strengthened the rights of the service users to make their own decisions about their lives. Previously, many decisions were made on behalf of service users in a rather paternalistic manner. The person is now at the centre of the plans and the decision-making process is clearer and more transparent.

Jo Bennett explained that as yet there is insufficient information regarding the impact of the Homelessness Act on learning disabilities and mental health services.

Changes.

Mark Stables, Service Manager for the Integrated Learning Disability Service explained that the legislation sets out good practice. The service was recognised as being the third best in the South at the last audit and has exceeded this since then. There are more than 55 people in supported living accommodation. The team is truly integrated with many different professionals working together. Service users are asked what they want to achieve and their outcomes monitored. There is no waiting list now. The Housing Transformation Strategy has funding.

Lu Dash explained that support is more flexible to meet the individual's desired outcomes. Traditionally, day care services would be provided with safe, stimulating activity. Now there is more recognition that everyone has lots to share with society.

Tim Holland noted that it has been standard practice for a number of years to put the person at the centre of plans.

David Green explained that each service user has a set outcomes which are now continuously monitored by the provider to ensure that they are at a pace that is right for them. If their needs or aspirations change, the council's team is very responsive and works well with the providers. Dealing with an integrated team of professions is much easier for the providers.

Reasons for the Changes.

Lu Dash explained that the culture change has been an evolution rather than a revolution. Support for people with learning disabilities is ahead of the curve in terms of good practice. People are attracted to support work.

Mark Stables noted that the council revolutionised the manner in which it commissions its support services for people with learning disabilities. Discussions are underway with colleges and social enterprises regarding internships. Hampshire County Council has focussed on providing more for the most able service users and the others attend traditional day services.

Alison Cordwell explained that there had been a cultural shift and now the focus is on people's aspirations and what they can do. They are active participants in society. The cultural change happened because of the changes in legislation which built on what is right and proper.

David Green added that he concurred with the comments made previously. In Portsmouth the changes felt more like a revolution. Everyone has the same goal: to meet the individual's aspirations.

The Referral Process

Mark Stables and Alison Cloutman explained that the Housing Panel proactively plans services and accommodation tailored around the needs of the service user and refers to the appropriate provider.

Tim Holland explained that upon receipt of the referral, the providers carry out their own assessment to ensure that the property is suitable.

Ian Chalcraft added that each organisation provides a different range of services. A referral may not be appropriate for a range of reasons including the individual not getting on with the other tenants. There is a broad section of support available. If one provision does not work, there are other options.

Mark Stables noted that no organisation precludes itself from a referral. No organisation limits itself by solely providing one type of support. It is a meeting of minds between the providers and the commissioners to understand what is needed. The commissioners respect the expertise of the providers. The whole process is now more of a partnership.

Katheryn Slater explained that people who make self-referrals to her service are at the more capable end of the spectrum and generally require a low level of support. Some parents club together to buy or rent a property for their children.

Funding.

David Green explained that finances are getting more difficult every year.

Roy Shipley explained that provider rates were not flexible in the last framework agreement. Providers were only able to bid the rates they had quoted during the initial tender exercise, which resulted in progressively less bids being received. A new framework is currently out to tender, which will allow organisations to bid the rate that they feel is appropriate.

Mark Stables added that demand has increased but the costs have not increased proportionately because projects are designed to make savings and some people have been transferred from out of city placements.

Demand

Ian Chalcraft explained that the number of people who identify themselves as having a learning disability is increasing. This is due to a number of reasons:

- More premature babies survive birth and many have severe and multiple disabilities.
- The life expectancy for people with Downs Syndrome has increased significantly; however they are more likely to develop dementia in later life.
- Genetic causes used to be main cause of learning disabilities.
- The biggest single cause of learning disabilities is now foetal alcohol syndrome.
- People quite rightly, have higher expectations in terms of independent living and leading a more fulfilling life.
- There is more awareness of the support that is available to enable people to lead happy independent lives.

There are no significant problems with people who require support moving into the area.

The level of need exists and is resourced in many different ways.

Mark Stables explained that the right to move into independent accommodation is a basic Human Right. The council decided to change day services provision rather than cut it.

Jo Bennett explained that the council as a housing provider follows its allocation policy. It is important that the general needs population is not treated as a poor relation. If everyone has the right to live independently, the impact on everyone must be considered. There are 1,400 people on the housing waiting list.

Barriers to Accessing Services.

Ian Chalcraft explained that black, minority and ethnic communities are more reluctant to use services. Work is underway to try to improve take up. In the past, some people with religious beliefs had been reluctant to use respite services due to concerns that halal meat would not be served or prayers would not be observed. A Muslim consultant psychiatrist is visiting mosques in the city in order to improve relations.

Kathryn Slater agreed that BME groups tend not to access these services. This may be due to cultural views that it is the family's duty to look after relatives. They can even be reluctant to use outreach support. Too often, it is only when a crisis happens and the family member is hospitalised, that they consider accessing support services.

Alison Cordwell explained that there is perceived to be a stigma attached to asking for help.

Jo Bennett, Commercial Property and Leasehold Services Manager explained that there is currently one individual who because of their behaviour, had not yet been found appropriate housing. Discussions were ongoing about designing a bespoke care and accommodation package.

Different types of housing may be suitable at different times of people's lives. Over the last six years, some kind of accommodation has been created for every pathway. Flexibility is essential to be able to do this. One example of the service being flexible is permitting a tenant to move before their tenancy has expired.

Mark Stables explained that as people's needs change, they move into different properties and the vacancies are taken up by others.

Expanding the models of work to other services.

Mark Stables explained that many people who have mental health issues are in residential care outside the city.

Jo Bennett explained that in a housing pathway, there are any number of different service users and that community accommodation is available for all. Six years ago the statutory minimum was provided in terms of houses i.e. only for people with general needs, the homeless and people with substance misuse issues. The council decided to expand this service to more people. Demand is increasing for people with mental health issues. 26 beds for adults with mental health issues are being commissioned or developed.

Mark Stables explained that people with different disabilities are not lodged together as the possible stigmas would multiply.

The learning disabilities team's models of working would work equally well for adult mental health. The learning disability team has its housing support strategy. The Mental Health Team is developing its own and adult social care is keen to develop one too.

David Green and Kathryn Slater explained that the providers already support people with different needs. They are more than happy to work with the council about services that are required.

Possible Improvements.

Sam Leath explained that organisations need to do more to empower their staff to take risks. Additionally, more investment is required in assistive technology to enable savings and empower individuals.

Lu Dash added that staff time could then be focussed on providing emotional support. In order to create smart houses, the technology needs to be hardwired when the houses are built rather than bolted on afterwards. Staff love their jobs but there is a stigma to them and they are also poorly paid.

David Green explained that the technological infrastructure is not currently being put into houses. He added that more must be done to recruit train and retain a skilled workforce. The work they do is awe-inspiring. The sector should work more closely together to raise the profile and share good practice.

Tim Holland added that recruitment is difficult because the pay is low, support work has a negative reputation and is not valued in society.

Alison Cordwell explained that all the providers are looking into doing things differently.

Mark Stables explained that it is important to ask the individual what they want to achieve and whether they have any friends or family who could assist them. The council does not want to arrange paid support when natural support is available. Kinship and friendship is a priority. The service Gig Buddies arranges volunteers to accompany people with disabilities to go out to the theatre etc.

It is important that more be done to ensure that support work is energised, focussed and exciting. Many people have said that they wished they had discovered this career sooner as they found it very rewarding.

The meeting concluded at 16:50.

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Councillor Darren Sanders
Chair