

COUNCIL – 29 NOVEMBER 2017

AGENDA ITEM 14 (B)

Question from Councillor J Radcliffe to the Cabinet Member Social Services & Early Help

“What assessment has the authority – either alone or as part of regional collaboration – made (or intends to make) of the implications of the recent British Medical Journal research (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/7/11/e017722>) on the link between social care cuts and mortality rates in care homes in England, and how will the authority use this research to inform budget planning and service design?”

Response from the Cabinet Member Social Services & Early Help to Councillor J Radcliffe

It should be noted that this research relates to care homes in England, rather than Wales, and the article itself refers to limitations and that it needs to be treated carefully at a lower level of population. As such:

- Variations may exist at the local level which were not identified by the study (i.e. it is not inevitable that this pattern is repeated in any one LA area or indeed in Wales compared to England)
- There may be other mediating factors beyond those explored in this analysis (i.e. lots of factors as well as macro-economic conditions may have an influence, including, I would assume, the actual population make up including the age at which people come into care homes and nursing homes, male/female mix, Learning Disability survivals etc.)

There is a potentially a simpler explanation to the finding identified by Cllr Radcliffe: older people are going into residential care at a later stage in their lives and their length of stay are shorter.

Pressures due to social care continue to pose a risk to the Council’s financial sustainability in the medium to long term. The wider challenges facing social care have been well documented; as a result of demographic changes primary and community services are facing increasing and more complex demands. More people are diagnosed with one or more preventable health conditions and frail older people increasingly have more complex needs. It can be argued that these significant challenges facing social care are such that new thinking on funding is required and new models of service delivery are required.

The Western Bay Commissioning Strategy (which was developed with regional Local Authority and Health partners alongside the independent health and social care consultancy, the Institute of Public Care) focuses on a shift in care from residential services to an increase in services in the community with the introduction of intermediate care and so on.

This is very much in keeping with legislation in Wales, Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, which came into force in April 2016. The Act provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support and for transforming social services in Wales, a fundamental principle of which is around **Prevention and Early Intervention** – increasing preventative services within the community to minimise the escalation of critical need.

Therefore, more people are going into residential care/nursing care at a later stage for shorter periods with more complex needs. The focus of this shift is better outcomes for older people and enabling them to be more independent for longer, although in the vast majority of cases care and support at home is also less costly than residential care. We cannot continue with the 'old models' as financially they are not sustainable, so more services are now available in the community. This is generally better for individuals too. However, if an individual is assessed to require a care home placement, the LA or HB will make the necessary placement and pay for it.