

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

16 FEBRUARY 2023

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to describe the learning disability services that operate in the county borough and to report on developments in the way learning disability services are provided and the key factors that affect this.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:
- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy, and independent lives.
 - **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human, and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 In the county borough there are a range of services for people with a learning disability and their families or carers which have been developing since the closure of long stay hospitals, such as Hensol and Ely Hospitals, in the 1980's and 1990's. Hospital services were replaced with services in the community which have been changing and developing ever since. These developments have happened within the framework of Welsh Government policy and guidance, the most recent of which is the 'Learning Disability Improving Lives Programme' launched in 2018 and makes recommendations for service developments in five cross cutting themes which are:
- Early years
 - Housing
 - Social Care
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Education employment and skills

- 3.2 A learning disability is defined as a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities such as managing money, household tasks, communication, employment and socialising. A learning disability will affect a person for their whole life and is usually caused when the development of a person's brain is adversely affected before, during or after birth. A person may have a mild, moderate, or severe learning disability and may have associated physical health problems, difficulties with mobility and co-occurring conditions such as autism or epilepsy. There are currently 460 people with a learning disability known to the Bridgend Community Learning Disability Team.
- 3.3 In the county borough there is a comprehensive range of services for people with a learning disability and their families or carers including:
- A Community Learning Disability Team which consists of qualified and unqualified social workers.
 - Day opportunity services based at Bridgend Resource Centre and four community hubs.
 - Short break and emergency services including an adult placement scheme.
 - Domiciliary services.
 - Supported accommodation and residential care.
 - Direct payments.
- 3.4 The Community Learning Disability Team carry out assessments of individual situations and then write care and support plans which set out what services are going to be used to provide help and support to the individual and their family. This work is done by putting the individual at the centre of the process and building on their strengths and aspirations and to support the individual to live as independently as possible. This work is often done in partnership with health colleagues such as nurses, psychologists, and therapists. Case studies are included in **Appendix One**.
- 3.5 A key driver in the development and provision of learning disability services is the participation and involvement of people with a learning disability and their families in decision making at all levels including the assessment and care and support planning process, service planning and developments. To support this the community learning disability team practice in a person centred and strength-based way as do staff in services when they are designing and implementing support plans. In order to involve people in service development and planning, the service has worked in close partnership with 'People First Bridgend' who support people with a learning disability, to take part in planning activities and to express their views. People First also provide an advocacy service and have assisted in producing a number of easy read documents. The service has also worked in close partnership with the 'Parents Forum' which has provided help and support to family members to participate in planning activities and groups.
- 3.6 The assessment and care and support planning process, as well as the way in which services are designed and delivered, has changed considerably since the closure of long stay hospitals. The assessment process has become much more 'person centred' i.e., listening to and working with people to put in place support services. Service design has moved away from institutional models of care to locally

based support and enabling services. Also, the support needs of people with severe learning disabilities have become much better understood and specialist services have developed that enable people to continue living with their families or in their own home in the community.

- 3.7 In learning disability services there is a well-balanced mixed economy of service delivery. Services are commissioned through the care and support plan and could be provided 'in house' by the council (e.g. day opportunity services (this is an integrated service for both people with a learning disability, older people and people with dementia) short break and emergency services, and supported living services) or externally by a provider in the independent sector (e.g. domiciliary services, supported living and work and training related projects). The adult placement scheme is provided through a partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan Council.
- 3.8 There has also been a strong focus on value for money and efficient use of resources in learning disability services which has focused on the way services are commissioned and structured. Between 2012/13 and 2022/23, as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, £2.83 million has been achieved in savings within learning disability services.
- 3.9 The changes and developments in these services have been managed and coordinated as part of the remodeling adult social care program in the learning disability service development plan, the Medium Term Financial Strategy, and the views, wishes and choices of people with a learning disability and their families. The global covid 19 pandemic has slowed the momentum of some of this work and in 2021-2022 the service development plan was relaunched to take developments to the next level.
- 3.10 The changes and developments in learning disability services has been guided by national policy and guidance issued by the Welsh Government, the first guidance was issued in 1983. In 2018 the 'Improving Lives Programme', as mentioned above, was launched and most recently guidance was issued in May 2022 called 'Learning Disability Strategic Action Plan 2022 to 2026. Our plan for developing and implementing learning disability policy from 2022 to 2026'. The key elements of this action plan are as follows:
- To promote wellbeing during and as we come out of covid
 - Improve services to people with very special support needs by reducing 'restrictive practices'
 - People supported closer to home not in services miles away
 - People with very special needs should be resettled from hospitals, residential or nursing homes
 - To make sure the plans meet the needs of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities
 - To establish a learning disability 'Observatory' store of information to inform decision making
 - To learn from the sad deaths of people in hospital
 - To further develop Positive Behavioural Support more staff training
 - More health checks and social prescribing to help wellbeing
 - Have a better response to loneliness and isolation

- Better access to social services e.g., short break and day services.

The action plan also identifies key objectives of improving access to accommodation, employment, training, and transport. This action plan has provided a framework for the development of a local plan which is described in section 4.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 In response to the Welsh Government 'Learning Disability Strategic Action Plan 2022 to 2026' and to put in place a new local service delivery plan a group of managers from all service areas, people with a learning disability supported by People First and a family member came together to start work on priorities for a plan. The underpinning principle for this work was that it must be co-produced by working in partnership with people who use services and support and enabling the continuance of the plan to reflect their priorities. To help this the group organised a training course in co-production and held a number of workshops to work on the plan. This process also provided a very helpful focussed activity bringing people together to help with recovery from the pandemic.

After three workshops and a number of smaller discussions the group co-produced four priority areas for the plan and four groups have been established to work on them. Each group has produced a work plan with objectives and timescales. The four areas are:

1. To improve the access to and availability of transport
2. To further develop ways in which people can have more social contact
3. To support people to be able to use 'tech to talk'
4. To facilitate more joint working between partners.

A copy of the full plan can be found in **Appendix Two**.

There are two highlights that have come from this work already. One is that we are introducing an app called 'Insight' which is a social media application which enables people with a learning disability to talk to each other and make arrangements safely. The second is that an event is being arranged which will be to celebrate good practice in supporting people with a learning disability.

The development of the plan is being overseen by a management board and the group has decided to appoint a person with a learning disability to be the chairperson of the group.

- 4.2 In order to help identify and focus on other areas for development and improvement in learning disability services an external expert has been engaged to carry out a service review. The review will focus on two main areas:
1. To appraise social work practice in the formulation of care and support packages, the appropriateness of these arrangements in relation to assessed need and a 'value for money' exercise in relation to the cost effectiveness of these packages

2. To carry out a review of the current and future demand on day opportunity services and to make recommendations for future service configuration.

To do this the external expert is in the process of reviewing forty individual files, reviewing performance and financial data, assessing the circumstances around residential and supported living placements in the last five years and in relation to day services a demand and service delivery review including a number of interviews and focus groups with people who use services. They are also interviewing a range of managers from across the service. The outcome of this review will be reported in April 2023 and will help inform the next service delivery plan for day opportunity services and team plan for the Community Learning Disability Team.

- 4.3 Another factor that the review will consider, and which is crucial to the effective delivery of learning disability services, is the joint working relationship with health colleagues. The Community Learning Disability Team operates alongside a community health team which consist of specialist nurses, psychologists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and a Consultant Psychiatrist. A piece of work is has begun to update the joint operational policy between the two teams and clarify how the teams interact and agree priorities. There is also work, which began in 2022, to put in place a joint commissioning and funding agreement between the Council and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board for one of the specialist accommodation schemes. If this is successful, the agreement could be extended to more jointly funded projects and schemes.

The service will also be working with the reviewers to highlight the need for a joint strategic planning forum to be put in place as there is an urgency for a strategic plan for moving the people who are in hospital and out of area placements to a supported living arrangement in the county borough. This is in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government Strategic Action Plan.

- 4.4 The review will also be focusing part of their analysis on the process by which children and young people transition from Childrens to Adult services. Further to a pilot project in 2016/17 a new transition team was established in the directorate which works with young people between the ages of 14 and 25 with the objective of supporting a smooth transition process. It is timely for the operation of this team to be evaluated and recommendations made for its future operation and how it fits with the wider adult social care arrangements.

- 4.5 There is another significant factor that has affected learning disability services which was the implementation of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLs) which were introduced into legislation as part of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. DOLs is a procedure prescribed in law when it is necessary to deprive a tenant, resident, or patient of their liberty, who lacks capacity to consent to their care and treatment, in order to keep them safe from harm. An application to put a DOLs in place is made to the Court of Protection who has the power to agree the deprivation. Currently DOLS applies mostly to people who live in residential care or supported living and lack capacity and are restricted in their movements in or outside of their residence. There are 140 people known to the Community Learning Disability Team for whom DOLS applications have been made to the Court and in most cases agreed, some are disputed, and the Court has to find a resolution. This work has been very demanding on the teams' resources and time. This situation is going to become more demanding

with the introduction of Liberty Protection Safeguards which is planned for 2024 and will replace DOLs.

4.6 All of the factors described above have an impact on the learning disability service budget. This budget supports all the activities in learning disability services including the provision of in-house services and externally commissioned services. The net budget for 2022/2023 is £18.7 million which takes into account £6.1 million of income mostly from charges and health contributions. This budget is under significant pressure because of a number of major factors which are set out below:

- Increases in the hourly cost of providing supported living services because of pressure on wage rates, cost of living increases and increased organisational overhead costs.
- Increases in the number of support hours required in all service areas because of the increasing complexity of the support needs of many people, more night-time support required and the effects of an ageing population.
- In the 'post pandemic' period a number of people who live in supported living decided to reduce the amount of time they spend in day opportunity settings and spend more time at home and engaging in activities in the Community. This has meant more support hours are required in accommodation services. This change was a deliberate service intention and part of the first phase of the service development plan, but the effect of the pandemic was to accelerate this process and for the impact on support hours to be immediate and across the whole of the service at the same time.
- The impact of young people coming through transition from children's services and requiring specialist accommodation placements has been considerable. Many of these young people do not have a learning disability which easily fits the definition above. This group of people have had their development disabled because of the effects of multiple complex emotional, behavioural and mental health problems combined with difficulties and deficits in skill development and learning.
- There has also been a significant impact because of the increasing number of people with autism and other neurodiverse conditions. These conditions add to the complexity of support needs, the intensity and unpredictability of behaviours and the demand for additional staff training and support and the provision of specialist equipment and environmental design.

All of these factors have a major impact in their own right but when combined, which is often the case, the impact on service budgets is increasingly significant. At quarter 3, the projected over spend on learning disabilities budgets was £3.6 million.

4.7 There is also a regional perspective to developments in learning disability services and the Regional Partnership Board has established a regional learning disability group to prioritise and coordinate service developments. This work is being done across the themes of, home, health and community and three working groups have been established to take this forward. The main group has appointed a person with a learning disability as chair and meetings are held regularly with representatives from the local authorities, health boards, People First, voluntary sector organisations and a parent representative.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no effect on policy framework and procedure rules from this report.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore, it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver well-being outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report.

- **Long term.** The plans for and operation of learning disability services is designed to be robust and sustainable with long term goals and objectives and service developments which enable the services to adapt and change according to changes in demand for services.
- **Prevention.** As described above the services have a strong emphasis on prevention and providing people with information and support. Some of the information is available in an easy read format.
- **Integration.** Learning disability services are founded on an ethos of partnership and joint working between with health, the voluntary and independent sectors, service user and carer organisations.

- **Collaboration.** All the services described in this report are provided on a collaborative basis with key partners e.g., people who use the services, families and health partners.
- **Involvement.** One of the basic principles of the operation of learning disability services is the involvement of the people who use services and their families in the design and delivery of the services they receive.

8. Financial implications

8.1 The net learning disabilities budget for 2022/2023 is £18.7 million and the budget is projected to overspend by £3.6 million in 2022/2023 for the reasons described above.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee consider the report and make any comments on the future direction of learning disability services across the county borough of Bridgend.

Claire Marchant
Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
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Contact officer: Mark Wilkinson
Group Manager, Learning Disability, Mental Health and
Substance Misuse.

Telephone: (01656) 642281

Email: mark.wilkinson@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal address: Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend CF31 4WB

Background documents:

None