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## CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE THURSDAY, 20 APRIL 2023

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**Present:** Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams (Chair)  
Councillor Linda Ann Jones (Vice-chair)

**Councillors:** Anwen J. Davies, Jina Gwyrfai, R. Medwyn Hughes, Dewi Jones, Elwyn Jones, Beth Lawton, Linda Morgan, Gwynfor Owen, John Pughe, Meryl Roberts, Angela Russell, Einir Wyn Williams and Sasha Williams.

**Officers in attendance:** Llywela Haf Owain (Senior Language and Scrutiny Advisor) and Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer).

**Others invited:**

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being)  
Councillor Elin Walker Jones (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)  
Huw Dylan Owen (Statutory Director of Social Services)  
Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)  
Helen Fon Owen (Learning Disabilities Senior Manager)

**Present for item 5:**

Aled Gibbard (Senior Operational Manager, Children and Supporting Families Department)

**Present for item 6:**

Mari Wynne Jones (Senior Manager, Adults Services)

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Menna Baines, Rheinallt Puw and Gareth Coj Parry.

**2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

The following member declared that he had an interest in relation to the item noted:

- Councillor Gwynfor Owen in items 5 and 6 on the agenda as his son was autistic. The Member was of the opinion that it was not a prejudicial interest and he did not withdraw from the meeting.

**3. URGENT ITEMS**

None to note.

**4. MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee held on 16 February 2023, as a true record.

**5. UPDATE ON THE GWYNEDD AUTISM PLAN**

The Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being highlighted that the report was a joint report between the Adults Services and the Children's Services to ensure that the Autism plan was incorporated smoothly into both services. He noted, as Chair of the Regional Partnership Board (which is responsible for gathering information to improve and the quality of the services provided to autistic people and their families or carers), that the Plan received prominent attention.

Councillor Elin Walker Jones (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) confirmed that significant progress had been made by Cyngor Gwynedd since the Code of Practice for the Delivery of Autism Services came into force in September 2021. There was reference to the successful bid that had been made which would mean that staffing resources could be increased for the development of Autism services across the County, development of E-learning modules to raise the awareness of Local Authority staff, the Health Board and the Police and reference to the National Autism Team which had a general role in the development of services throughout Wales and, by meeting every quarter, provided an opportunity to share relevant information and updates.

It was noted that the priorities for the next six months included

- An induction plan for the new team and the launch of the new service to raise awareness.
- Establishing clear processes and arrangements for the team to work across children's and adults' services. Contacting existing forums.
- Further strengthening the links with the Regional Integrated Autism Service, attending their local information events and looking for opportunities to work alongside their contact worker in Gwynedd.
- Engaging with autistic individuals and their families as well as partners locally in order to move towards the co-production of local services.
- Establishing a working relationship with the neurodevelopmental service and offering support during the early stages of assessment and diagnosis.
- Completing the implementation update as part of the baseline assessment for north Wales by the end of May.
- Reviewing Gwynedd's autism plan based on the information contained in the baseline assessment.

Gratitude was expressed for the presentation.

During the discussion, the following observations were submitted by members:

- Praise for the work that the service does.
- Welcoming the appointment of a Coordinator/Project Officer to develop Autism Services.
- That it was necessary to ensure Welsh language appointments so that children from Welsh households were not at a disadvantage.
- That there was a need to see change and ensure that this was not merely a paper exercise.
- That the Autism Bus was excellent (offering innovative and practical training developed to give people who are not autistic an experience of the difficulties faced by people on the autism spectrum) and that this touring bus should be promoted.
- That the spectrum was broad and that it was important to recognise who really needed support.
- That there was a need to ensure appropriate support for adults and children as they went through the assessment process.

- Concern that children were being rejected by the assessment service because they did not meet the criteria - where then would these children receive attention? It was noted that the service needed to be simplified.
- That there were comparisons between Autism and Dementia and that identifying opportunities for collaboration between the two teams should be encouraged. It was suggested that a scheme be established similar to Dementia Friendly.
- That the autism service required input from the Education Department and the Health Board. It was suggested to hold a discussion and/or set up a task and finish group to share information.

In response to observations and questions submitted by members, it was noted:

- According to regional data collection work completed by Conwy and Denbighshire (which included figures from Gwynedd and Anglesey and was based on the population), there were approximately 900 adults and between 300 and 350 children receiving help from the County. It was confirmed, although the information was not reliable, that there was an increase in referrals and the number on the waiting list to receive an assessment. The Cabinet Member pointed out that she shared the Councillors' concerns about the waiting lists and her intention to write to the Health Service highlighting the concerns, which would include the use of the Welsh language.
- In response to a comment that many paid privately for an assessment due to the waiting list with the current system (a suggestion was made that having a private assessment did not give earlier access to services) and how the waiting list could be resolved, it was noted that approximately 200 were on the current children's waiting list. It was added that the new service would not deal with this, but that the work plan was likely to create a working network to find information and create contacts. It was also noted that it would be necessary to establish a relationship with the neurodevelopmental service and offer support during the early stages of assessment and diagnosis.
- In response to a comment that it was necessary to ensure that events were held in rural areas, it was highlighted that additional resources were available to identify new opportunities to provide preventive support and raise awareness locally. It was noted that Derwen already offered information dates for families and collaborated with Byw'n Iach to conduct training. The plan would focus on ensuring better communication with families and on holding regular sessions (ensuring events across the County).
- Following recent press reports that the number of older women being diagnosed with autism was increasing, it was noted that the National Autism Team had developed a Community of Practice which developed knowledge and focused specifically on this issue.
- That the leader's aim would be co-production with the integrated team to ensure good engagement and collaboration with parents and carers, involving them in discussions about developing the relationship and developing support for parents. It was added that Derwen conducted activities and information sessions, e.g. emotion management sessions, although accepting the need to do more.
- The intention to ensure that all members of staff who worked directly with children, young people or adults should undertake ASD awareness training, although at a general level, was welcomed. It was emphasised that intense training must be ensured for those dealing with autism directly. In response, it was noted that mandatory training was being presented to all Council staff

(approximately 400 had completed it to date), which was included as one part of three ASD training levels. Those who dealt with autism directly would receive training on two higher levels.

- To ensure that there were no differences between the needs of children and adults, it was ensured that the individual was at the centre of the service and that the best provision would be offered - the aim of the service was to collaborate around the individual. It was noted that there was a significant improvement to the individual after receiving support.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) To accept the report, noting the observations made during the meeting**
- b) Establish a Task and Finish Group to discuss the implementation of the Plan with the new team and ensure representation from the Education Department and the Health Board**
- c) To receive a progress report in six months**

**6. SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITH DEMENTIA IN GWYNEDD**

The report was submitted by Cllr Dilwyn Morgan, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being. He highlighted that the main purpose of the report was to outline the new developments in Gwynedd to support individuals who had dementia.

The Senior Manager of Adults Services added that the County's vision was to support individuals living with dementia in order to enable them to live at home as independently as possible for as long as possible with the need to ensure the correct, timely care provision and support, in the right place to meet a range of needs. She explained that the role of Gwynedd Dementia Coordinator was recently created in order to lead in the field within the Council by working with individuals who had been affected by dementia, the Health Board and the Third Sector. The coordinator would be responsible for creating a vision and strategy for Dementia Gwynedd to respond to the care standards pathway. This was a temporary post funded from the Regional Integrated Fund (RIF).

Reference was made to the next steps, reporting that the Service was dependent on temporary funding to support a great number of the developments in care provision for individuals with dementia. The challenge would be to secure long-term funding to ensure the sustainability and continued development of these services. Work would be done to predict the impact of demand on budgets over the next few years and difficult decisions would need to be made in terms of reprioritising resources if no additional budget was available.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

During the discussion, the following observations were submitted by members:

- The development of Penyberth Care Home, Penrhos, was welcomed, a direction the Council wished to follow and which steered the direction of care in the future and the transformation of the service.
- That the Gwynedd Dementia Actif Service was doing exceptional work that had been recognised across Wales - congratulations to the team.
- That involving the family in care assessments was essential to dementia support.
- That people must be kept in their communities.

In response to the observations and questions from members, it was noted:

- In response to a comment that there was no specialist nursing provision available for individuals living in the Llŷn and Meirionnydd areas and the suggestion that adequate provision should be demanded through influence, it was noted that it had not been possible for Local Authorities to provide nursing care but that the Council was now intervening more in the market as gaps in services appeared in the areas. It was noted that some elements of the provision could be resolved but that neither the Health Board nor independent companies were compelled to provide a dementia specialist nursing care service in all parts of the County - however, business decisions could be encouraged and influenced. Despite appreciating the work that was being done, the need must be responded to and therefore the Council was considering the efficiency of providing a service rather than buying in a service (in some situations). It was noted that there was a need to ensure equal provision across the County - possibilities would be considered for the Penyberth site in the future.
- That Llys Cadfan Tywyn offered 33 beds with 15 being specialist dementia beds - nevertheless, some individuals were seen being moved from their locality (as far as Pwllheli or Bangor) to receive suitable care. It was noted that staffing in the field of care was challenging and therefore staff were put to the best use to maintain a service in the most effective way. It was accepted that moving out of a locality created anxiety and that the aim was to remain in the community. It was explained that dementia residential care was being provided at Llys Cadfan. If the needs of individuals intensified and required specialist nursing care, then unfortunately there was no suitable provision available locally.
- Following the Health Board's decision to temporarily close Dyfi Ward at Tywyn Hospital due to a shortage of staff, and to use beds at Dolgellau Hospital to safeguard patients, it was stated that the situation was not acceptable. Concern was expressed that Llys Cadfan would lose the support and expertise of the Hospital, but it was confirmed that the residents of Llys Cadfan were supported and cared for by community nurses, in accordance with the need. The service's effective response, within a very short time, to the decision to close Dyfi ward was appreciated.
- That the service was aware of the shortage of doctors in the Tywyn area and that discussions had been held with the Health Board. It was noted that a doctor from Dolgellau took care of Tywyn hospital patients but that no arrangement existed for doctors from Dolgellau to support residents in the homes. It was added that further discussions needed to be held with the Health Board regarding the development and provision of services in the area in the future.
- That money for the dementia support workers scheme was delivered through specific funding programmes - some of which were regional allocations where bids would be submitted for a proportion of the money. It was explained that many elements of the service were now dependent on these financial sources and although dementia was a core service, there was no permanent fixed budget for it. This was dependent on the national system.

In response to a comment that temporary funding leads to temporary appointments and that this was a reason for some choosing not to apply for jobs as they were not permanent, it was accepted that this was a problem but that there was enthusiasm among those who wanted to work in this specific field (although not true for all fields of work). It was added that there had to be strategic working, bearing in mind that the number of young people was decreasing while the number of people over the age of 85 was increasing significantly. We must therefore respond by considering

preventive work, using effective technology and promoting direct payments in our Communities.

- In terms of the recruitment and retention of staff in the care field and the need for the development at Penyberth to be successful, it was noted that workforce planning was an elementary part of the development.

## **RESOLVED**

**To accept the report, noting the observations made during the meeting.**

The meeting commenced at 10.30 a.m. and concluded at 1.00 p.m.

**CHAIR**