

MEETING	Governance and Audit Committee
DATE	6 February 2025
TITLE	SPECIAL AUDIT REPORT - HOME CARE
AUTHOR	Aled Davies - Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Dilwyn Morgan

1. Introduction

Governance and Audit Committee

A report on a Home Care Special Audit carried out by the Internal Audit service was submitted to the Committee on 28 November.

The report noted that the home care commissioning model was an ambitious one and that there were challenges to implementing it. It was found that some processes, the use and management of data, and budgetary management/monitoring were not effective and that these issues required attention and swift action. Internal Audit reported that an element of restructuring the model had been put in place and a Project Group had been set up led by the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department to implement a programme of work designed to address weaknesses and prioritise the work. It was noted that Internal Audit are invited to attend the Project Group.

It was decided to accept the contents of the report and note the information. A request was also made for a further report/update from the Adults, Health and Well-being Department to clarify steps underway to respond to the issues raised and to ensure the situation improves. A desire was expressed to have the Chief Executive's input to the report.

It is emphasised again that the audit carried out by the Internal Audit service did not cover a review of the care that is provided.

Care Scrutiny Committee

When the report was submitted about the establishment of the new home care commissioning system, a commitment was made to report on the system a year after its establishment to assess what had worked and to identify issues for improvement. The report addressing this was presented to the Care Scrutiny Committee meeting on 26 September 2024 to support Committee members' desire to take stock of the effectiveness of home care provision across the county particularly in maintaining and improving services for residents.

The main message of this report was that the Council had adopted a new and ambitious home care model, which was in line with the national care commissioning principles and

standards. It was noted that there were many successes to celebrate, many areas where there was hardly any waiting list for care and there was great potential to improve the quality of life for residents in need of care and staff through the new model.

Nevertheless, it was also stressed that we could not ignore the fact that difficulties existed in some areas of the County, and that the challenges were as numerous as the successes. It was noted that there was a lot of work ahead of the Home Care Project Board, and that work would need to be prioritised and would require adequate resource.

The report refers to the fact that the Internal Audit Service was undertaking a special audit into the commissioning arrangements of private home care which would also feed into and influence the work priorities of the Home Care Project Group.

2. Context - The new model

Changes have been made to the way that the Council provides home care, with the Council providing services in some areas and commissioning others to provide a service in other areas. The work has continued to try to ensure that new ways of working develop across the County to align with national expectations and these principles:

- Improved terms and work arrangements for staff
- More flexibility for residents and a clearer focus on what's important to them
- Collaboration between providers and health and care staff in the community, to offer better coordinated services and make more effective use of scarce resources
- Capitalise on the strengths of local communities to reinforce the care available and improve people's quality of life.

We have a waiting list for home care, but we are confident that working towards the new model is one of the factors that has contributed to its reduction over the past 12-18 months. When the report was presented to the Scrutiny Committee in September, data showed that 8,800 hours of home care was provided each week across the County, but an additional 920 hours could not be met. This meant there were 126 people on a waiting list for either new packages of home care or additional hours linked to an existing package of care. By the time of preparing this report, around 8,800 hours of home care are being provided with 625 hours that cannot be provided. There are 79 people on the waiting list with 65 waiting for a new package. Clearly, despite the positive shift, it must be acknowledged that the situation remains unacceptable. It can be confirmed that efforts are continuing to take steps such as:

- Supporting people who assess for care to consider the strengths of the individual and the community and not to commission care when it is not the best solution.
- Collaborate with community partners to develop suitable community hubs and suitable community provisions to meet people's needs.
- Refine work processes and the quality of local discussions to ensure staff resources are used in the most effective and efficient way possible.

The report submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee presented information in response to specific questions by committee members:-

- Does the existing way of providing home care work?
- What are the successes and challenges?
- Are there issues in some areas?
- If there are issues do you have plans to communicate with/update local members of the situations, particularly ones that result in hospital bed blocking?

This report will not repeat the information submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee in September 2024, but members of the Governance and Audit Committee are encouraged to read that report as it is useful to clarify exactly what we are seeking to achieve and where we have reached so far.

Internal Audit Report Findings

The findings of the report were summarised as follows:-

- There is inadequate budgetary management of the provision of private home care.
- There are significant deficiencies on the operational management of commissioning home care.
- Although a risk log has been established, there is no clear record that the document is being kept live. The Department is now using Trello boards for project management, but no evidence was seen to confirm the content.
- Assurance cannot be given that the Department has effective management data for managing and commissioning private home care due to an over-reliance on the data of providers and lack of arrangements to cross-check the details with WCCIS.

It was noted that several elements had contributed to the overspending on private home care and the Governance and Audit Committee expressed its desire to be reassured that the issues identified in the report were properly addressed in a timely manner by implementing the Home Care Project Group's work programme.

Work programme to respond to the findings of the Internal Audit report

A Home Care Project Group was established back in March 2024. The Group led by the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department meets at least every two weeks, has established a prioritised work programme to strengthen provision and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's arrangements in the home care field.

It is important to note that the Group is paying attention to how social work teams deal with the provision of home care and the arrangements for the provision of in-house home care as well as the commissioning and management of private residential care provision that was the subject of the special audit by the Internal Audit Service. The Group's work programme reflects this.

As a consequence, it is highly likely that we will be reporting to this committee and the Care Scrutiny Committee that the Home Care Working Group's work programme also

makes a key contribution to the Department and the Council's response to matters likely to be raised in reports from the Wales Audit Office and Care Inspectorate Wales when they will be formally received in the next few weeks. These reports will be the output from a joint inspection of Adult Care Services in Gwynedd undertaken in October 2024.

High-level analysis of the Home Care Project Group's work programme

The Home Care Work Programme has been divided into 3 main 'streams', with a total of 63 sub-projects:

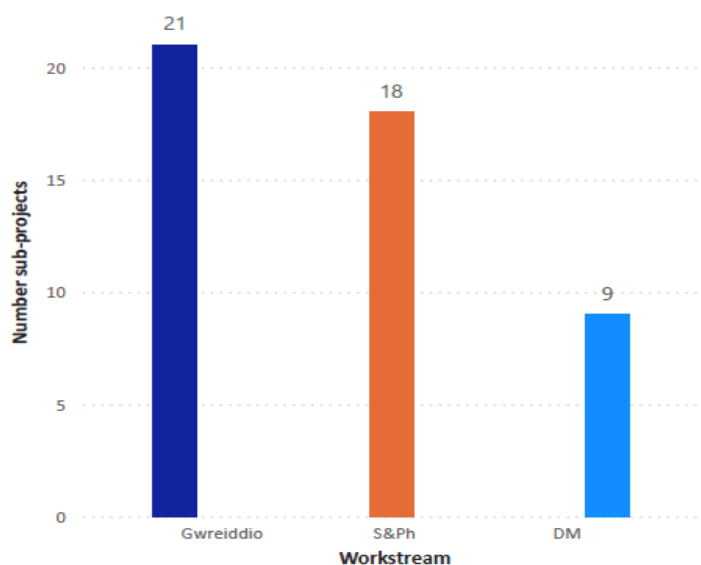
Work stream	Number of activities	Leader
Systems and processes	22	Assistant Head - Business Services
Providing in-house home care	15	Assistant Head - Provider Services
Embedding the new model of working	26	Assistant Head - Older People Services

48 of the sub-projects are involved in the following priority areas:-

- Waiting lists
- Expenditure/Funding
- Contract monitoring

See the breakdown of sub-projects in each work stream that influence the above 3 areas in the graph below.

Number of sub-projects acting on the indicators highlighted in inspection reports by workstream



- Embedding (Gwreiddio) the new model - 21 sub-projects
- Systems and processes (S&Ph) - 18 sub-projects
- In house provision (DM) - 9 sub-projects

A further breakdown showing the numbers of sub-projects in each stream responding to the work areas can be seen in Appendix 1.

When considering these work streams, it should be kept in mind:-

- That the system for commissioning and providing home care is broad and complex.
- That a few 'activities' are substantial and projects in themselves.
- That there are dependencies between many of the activities. For example, some cannot be started or completed until another activity has reached a certain milestone or been completed.
- All activities are prioritised as 'High', 'Medium' or 'Low'.

Examples and more detail about sub-projects that are in the Home Care Project Group's work programme will be presented at the Committee meeting.

The Group meets at least every two weeks to monitor progress on the plans in place and to discuss the removal of barriers to achieving them. The Group's decisions are minuted and the group maintains a full risk log which is monitored regularly.

The Team Leader from the Finance Department who supports the Adults, Health and Well-being Department is a member of the Group and there is an open invitation for representatives from the Internal Audit Service to attend.

The findings of the Internal Audit Special Report relate to issues identified that need to be addressed in terms of robust, effective and timely arrangements for implementation processes, budgetary management, contract management, monitoring, risk assessment, data use and progress reporting. The work of the Project Group is broad and the dependencies between the actions of the streams extensive. However, the issues raised in the audit report are mainly addressed in the Systems and Processes work stream of the work programme.

The Chief Executive's Response

"The Internal Audit Service was commissioned to carry out the special audit into the commissioning arrangements of private home care by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department. The audit exposed a number of weaknesses in the implementation of the arrangements.

The Adults, Health and Well-being Department responded to the initial findings of the Finance Unit by re-structuring the governance arrangements of home care work in the Department. A Project Group has been set up led by the Head of Department and a detailed work programme has been drawn up. The programme covers the entire home care provision. It addresses the private home care issues highlighted in the internal audit report and wider home care provision issues that have been identified by the Department. The programme is also likely to respond to some of the likely findings and recommendations of the Wales Audit Office and Care Inspectorate Wales reports which will be published shortly.

While the home care model adopted in Gwynedd aligns with the national objectives to have arrangements that put our residents at the centre and improve our services locally and contribute to reducing waiting lists, it must also be recognised that arrangements for

elements of its implementation have been weak. The Internal Audit report has highlighted that.

A broad and comprehensive work programme is now in place and the Care Services Director and I are satisfied that it lays the foundation for arrangements for the more effective and robust commissioning and monitoring of private home care provision. Positive steps have already been made but much remains to be done. The nature of demand and the provision of day-to-day home care services makes having a fully efficient system extremely difficult. But we must aim for that.

I can assure committee members that the Director and I will work closely with the relevant cabinet members to support the Adults, Health and Well-being Department to fully implement the work programme. We hope to see the outcomes of the work evident through the governance of the Home Care Project and through the usual performance challenge arrangements over the coming months."

Appendix 1 – Graph showing the allocation of the sub-projects.

Background documents

Home Care Services - Report to the Care Scrutiny Committee – 26th September 2024