

COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE INSPECTION REPORT ON SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AND THE COUNCIL'S ACTION PLAN

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: SOCIAL CARE ADULTS AND HEALTH

CABINET

21ST JUNE 2007

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

To notify Cabinet of the Commission for Social Care (CSCI)'s inspection report on services in Herefordshire for people with learning disabilities and seek Cabinet's approval for the Council's action plan to remedy weaknesses identified in the report.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

Recommendation

THAT Cabinet welcomes the report as an important contribution to the improvement of services for people with learning disabilities in the County, accepts the inspectors' judgement and their twenty-seven recommendations, and approves the Council's action plan to address them.

Reasons

This is a statutory inspection of services in Herefordshire to which the Council is obliged to respond with a detailed, robust action plan.

Considerations

1. CSCI carried out the inspection in January and February 2007. The report of the inspection is at Appendix 1. CSCI's easy-read version of the report is at Appendix 2.
2. While acknowledging that the Council has taken important steps towards creating modernised, better services that would provide better value for money following the detailed needs assessment and scrutiny review in 2006 and Cabinet's approval of the modernisation programme and associated investment in December 2006, the report identifies significant weaknesses in current services. The overall judgement of the inspectors is that the Council was not serving people with learning disabilities well and that there were uncertain prospects for future improvement.
3. The inspectors stress that the weaknesses need to be addressed not just by Adult Social Care but across the whole Council and its partners, including the PCT and the

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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voluntary, community and private sectors.

4. The most important weaknesses needing urgent attention are those concerning safeguarding, assessment and care management. In particular, although the Council had been successful in raising awareness of adult protection and generated a large increase in the number of safeguarding referrals in respect of adults with learning disabilities, the majority of the 530 people known to services had not had the expected minimum of a annual review of their needs and some had waited much longer.
5. Action has been taken already to address this backlog of reviews, through the engagement of an independent team of social workers. They have completed more than 50 reviews and a programme is in place to clear the backlog entirely by October 2007. Permanent additional staff are being recruited to ensure there is no recurrence of the backlog. The adult protection arrangements for all groups, including learning disabilities, are to be reviewed and re-launched.
6. The main other identified weaknesses and recommendations concern:
 - ensuring that the Council's and partners' plans and commissioning of services are comprehensive, integrated, realistic, properly resourced and prioritised to deliver successfully high-performing modernised services that maximise independence, well-being and choice;
 - better empowering people with learning disabilities and their carers, particularly by means of self-directed support (direct payments and individualised budgets), advocacy for individuals and strengthening the role of the Valuing People People's Partnership Board, which brings together all key stakeholders and should ensure that service users and carers are influential in the planning, development and delivery of services;
 - tackling inequalities and providing greater opportunities for people with learning disabilities, including through meaningful employment and better health care;
 - ensuring that the capacity is in place to deliver the radical improvements the Council and partners want to achieve, in terms of the staff and their skills, the medium-term commitment of the financial resources, and the ICT and other systems to support effective and efficient services.
7. The proposed action plan to address the recommendations is at Appendix 3. The lead inspector and the CSCI relationship manager indicated at the presentation of the report that they believe the plan to be an appropriate and robust response. In particular, they agree with the identified priorities, not least in according top priority to safeguarding, assessment and care management.
8. Cabinet has already approved – prior to the inspection – ring-fenced investment of £601K in 2007-08 to begin the modernisation of services, the release of the first phase of which has begun in response to a detailed business case. Decisions about the medium-term investment programme to complete the modernisation and provide much better services and value for money will need to be considered as part of this year's performance improvement cycle.
9. Substantial additional capacity has already been put in place to deliver the necessary improvements. There is now a dedicated head of service for learning disability services; an interim Improvement Leader for the whole programme of adult social

care improvement, whose role is likely to be subsumed in due course by a Change Manager, interviews for which are about to take place; as well as the strengthening of adult protection and assessment and care management staffing. In addition, two former directors of social care, each with a highly successful track record, not least in respect of learning disability services, have been commissioned to help the Council deliver the plan.

10. The implementation of the action plan will be rigorously managed as part of the overall programme for adult social care improvement, and therefore as part of the Council's comprehensive business transformation programme. Exceptions will therefore be reported to Cabinet as part of that programme. However, in view of the importance of this issue and its serious implications for the Council's reputation and rating by external inspectors, it is proposed that, in addition to monthly reports to the lead Cabinet member, there should be regular reports on progress to the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee and a report to Cabinet in October. This is against the background of CSCI intending to review progress formally in six months' time (although CSCI has not programmed a further inspection, this could happen were the Council's progress in implementing the plan be deemed unsatisfactory).
11. The Plan will be further developed and maintained as a live document in the light of progress and experience. As a result of the CSCI embargo of the report until 11 June, it has not been possible to conduct consultation with all stakeholders, including users and carers. This will now be done and the plan further improved, where necessary, in the light of that.

Risk Management

The main risk to the implementing the action plan is that we will not have all the necessary resources (human, financial and systems). These risks are being addressed by the measures described above and the details set out in respect of each of the recommendations in the action plan.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options.

Consultees

In view of the embargo applied by CSCI to the report, consultation to date has necessarily been limited to managers in the Council, the PCT and the Chair of the Valuing People Partnership Board. There will now be further consultation and engagement with other stakeholders, including users and carers, principally through the Board, as the plan is further developed and rolled out.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Commission for Social Care report *Inspection of services for people with learning disabilities Herefordshire Council – January/February 2007*

Appendix 2 – Easy-read version of the report

Appendix 3 – The Council's proposed action plan in response to the report

Background Papers

None identified.