

S38. SOCIAL WORK ADULT SERVICES OVERSPEND 2014/15

The committee considered a report by the Head of Social Work Adult Services providing information on the current budget position with Social Work Adult Services and actions taken to address the overspend. Joe McElholm provided an overview of the report.

Members discussed the sustainability of provision of services at Summerford and Oakbank, the Closer to Home project and the levels of home care provision provided by the Council and independent sector. Colin Moodie stated that there were challenges to both in-house and external provision of home care. He advised that the unit cost for an hour of home care provided in-house was more expensive than that in the independent sector. The Council was implementing a system of real time monitoring of home care staff to ensure that the service was run as efficiently as possible and to allow better comparison of unit price costs for an hour of care. Longer term commissioning with independent sector partners was being looked at. He stated that there was currently a mixed economy in place of in-house and independent provision. Joe McElholm advised that conditions for in-house care staff were generally better than those in the independent sector but that both recruited from the same pool of people. He stated that in the future the service could be designed to offer high quality dementia and end of life care in-house while utilising the independent sector to provide care to maintain people.

The committee sought information on the impact of the implementation of the living wage for carers. Joe McElholm advised that there was a complicated set of arrangements involved in the implementation. The Scottish Government was providing £250m to Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) for health and social care which would be distributed in proportion to each authority. It was anticipated that 50% of the allocation received by Falkirk would be used to implement the living wage payment for social care workers. Colin Moodie stated that work was required to scope across the range of independent providers, including care homes, to identify the cost of the measure. The convener stated that the living wage would not be implemented until October 2016.

Members commented that the issues relating to social care were replicated across the country and sought information on what other authorities were doing. Joe McElholm stated that the Service liaised with other authorities regularly and was keen to learn from practice elsewhere. He stated that the key messages from other authorities were the same as in Falkirk, that a focus on prevention was important along with a shift to self care/self management and the utilisation of reablement and intermediate care beds.

The committee discussed the impact of the introduction of the living wage on small companies who had been procured to provide social care and the Council's retention of modern apprentices in social care. In response to comments on the work of the IJB, the Chairperson of the IJB, Councillor A Black advised that the strategic plan had not yet been finalised. The approach to social care which was supported by the IJB was that of home first and information on projects to support this would be shared more widely with elected members along with information about locality planning and the Advice Line For You (ALFY). She advised that there was a delayed discharge group with senior staff from NHS Forth Valley and the Council which met weekly and that there was a long term cultural change required to implement the home first ethos. She noted that the Council was responsible for funding residential care. The committee requested that a briefing note to all elected members was used to disseminate information on the IJB including an indication of the financial benefits of new projects. Colin Moodie confirmed that this could be done and stated that the Closer To Home project was in a

very early stage but that a report would be submitted to the IJB in June to review project spending and associated impact.

Members discussed further the implementation of the living wage in social care and asked if the funding from the Scottish Government would be sufficient to meet the costs. Colin Moodie advised that calculating the impact in terms of Council employed carers would be relatively straight forward as their current rate of pay and the numbers affected were known. However, there would be a challenge in making the calculation in relation to the multiplicity of private providers and it was not known at this stage if the additional funding from the Scottish Government would be sufficient to cover the costs. It was also assumed that private providers would contribute 25% toward meeting the costs for their carers.

The committee asked that if there was a shortfall in funding for the implementation of the living wage if the Council would be required to make up the difference. Colin Moodie advised that the situation was not known at this time as no guidance had been issued on the matter.

In relation to the actions being taken to manage the budget pressures, members asked what amount was likely to be saved. Joe McElholm stated that it was difficult to give an exact figure as there were many variables involved. He highlighted the importance of reviewing complex care packages.

The committee asked what options would be available to the IJB if the overspend was replicated next year when it took over responsibility for the budget. Colin Moodie stated that the IJB should try to control overspends in certain areas by underspending elsewhere and take actions to address areas of overspend. If the overspend could not be addressed in this fashion then the IJB could ask the constituent parties, NHS Forth Valley and Falkirk Council, for extra funding. He advised that the actions presented in the report should move spending in the right direction and that historically the Service had been able to stay within budget.

Members commented that Falkirk had particularly challenging demographics and that in the near future the local community would be one of the oldest in Scotland. Colin Moodie stated that the Service would undertake a review of eligibility criteria to deliver services to those most in need and that packages would be kept under review to ensure they were still appropriate.

The committee requested an update report later in the year, Colin Moodie confirmed that this would be submitted containing information on the medium term issues.

Decision

The committee noted the report.