

Report to: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 8 September 2016

Lead Member / Officer: Leader/Corporate Director: Communities

Report Author: Strategic Planning Team Manager

Title: DWP/People Plus Provision in Denbighshire

1. What is the report about?

The relocation of DWP services provided by People Plus from Rhyl to Flint and the impacts this will have on the Denbighshire residents receiving the services.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To provide information regarding the change in provision as a basis for discussion and to assist the Council in establishing whether it could in future help support the delivery of such services. This would be with a view to improving outcomes, reducing poverty and the number of young people that become NEET, and fulfilling the objectives of both the Corporate and Well-being Plans.

3. What are the Recommendations?

To discuss with both organisations their visions for Denbighshire residents including:

- how they intend to deliver their vision and improve outcomes for service-users;
- the reasons behind the decision to relocate DWP services to Flint; and
- the result of the impact assessments undertaken to inform that decision.

4. Report details

DWP have a contract with Rehab Jobfit who subcontract to People Plus to deliver services in Rhyl to help unemployed people into work. People Plus receive payments based on outcomes, particularly the numbers of people supported into work and those who remain in work. The contract will terminate March 2017.

Client numbers have reduced significantly in Rhyl from approximately 400 18 months ago, to approximately 150. With uncertainty regarding future contracts and income, People Plus were not in a position to sign a new, more expensive 5 year lease agreement on their existing accommodation. As a result People Plus have made alternative arrangements to relocate to the Hub in Rhyl and where the full range of support will be on offer but only to those who are unable to travel to Flint; estimated to be 35 clients.

People Plus consulted with clients prior to the change and few complaints were received. In addition, the journey from Rhyl to Flint on the train is approximately 19 minutes and job seekers are required through their Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) agreement to be prepared to travel 90 minutes to find work. Therefore the requirement to travel to Flint does not break any contractual arrangements. Travel expenses will be reimbursed by People Plus to ensure that alternative arrangements do not financially disadvantage those clients needing to travel to Flint.

The relocation is not only to a more accessible premises but will put People Plus in the same location as other services supporting people back into work; a benefit to clients. In addition, with the new Work and Health Programme coming into being People Plus are keen to remain in Rhyl and to work more closely with Housing Associations.

In consideration of the People Plus contract coming to a close shortly, the Council would like to gain clarity concerning the contracts DWP issue to support people into work, which they are looking to retender and what these are designed to achieve. It would also be useful to gain clarity and understanding of the current landscape and potential impact of future changes (e.g. roll out of Universal Credit) so the Council can better understand how it can support the delivery of such services.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Increased numbers of residents in work supports a number of our corporate priorities indirectly and has a direct impact on our priority 'Developing the Local Economy' particularly by reducing deprivation.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

No implications.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report

The recommendations contained in this report do not require a decision to be taken and therefore will not have a direct impact on staff or our communities.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Discussions have taken place and email correspondence exchanged between Denbighshire County Council, DWP and People Plus to ascertain facts regarding the situation leading to the decision to relocate services as outlined in section 4 (Report Details) above.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

A Chief Finance Officer statement is not required for this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There are no specific risks attached to this report, however risk may come to light as a result of the discussion with DWP and People Plus.

11. Power to make the Decision

Section 7 of the Council's Constitution outlines Scrutiny's powers with respect of considering any matter that affects the Council's area or its inhabitants, and inviting external stakeholders to address scrutiny committees.

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