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NORTH WALES SOCIAL CARE AND WELL-BEING
SERVICES IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

Report title:	Audit Wales Review of Commissioning Older People's Care Home Placements by North Wales Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
Report to:	Governance and Audit Committee for Denbighshire County Council
Lead Officers:	Nicola Stubbins, Corporate Director Communities Catrin Roberts, Head of Collaboration, North Wales Social Care and Wellbeing Services Improvement Collaborative
Report author:	Catrin Perry, Business Manager – Regional Commissioning Board, North Wales Social Care and Wellbeing Services Improvement Collaborative
Date:	16 March 2022

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To detail the review conducted by Audit Wales in to the Commissioning of Older People's Care Home Placements by North Wales Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board [Appendix 2].
- 1.2 To detail the Management Response [Appendix 3] actions agreed regionally which respond to the recommendations given in the Audit Wales report.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the recommendations in the Audit Wales report on Commissioning of Older People's Care Home Placements by North Wales Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board [Appendix 2]
- 2.2 That the Committee notes the agreed actions in the Management Response [Appendix 3] to address these recommendations and receives regular updates on the implementation of the actions going forward.

3. Background information

- 3.1 As part of its Audit programme in August 2020 Audit Wales informed Local Authorities and the Health Board that it would be undertaking a review of Commissioning of Older People's Care Home Placements by North Wales Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. A workshop was held

by AW with local authority and health board partners in September 2020 to work through the draft brief for this review. The final brief for the review was issued to Local Authorities in November 2020.

3.2 As given in the final brief of November 2020 [Appendix 1], the purpose of the Audit Wales review stated “*In our Assurance and Risk Assessments for North Wales councils we identified strategic commissioning of residential and nursing care placements as a risk to both councils and the Health Board for the following reasons:*

- a. high level of spending on these services;*
- b. forecast increases in numbers of older people expected to need these services;*
- c. limited availability of new staff to support these services and recruitment competition with other health and social care providers; and*
- d. as yet untapped potential benefits of strategic commissioning across North Wales public sector bodies.*

Since identifying strategic commissioning of residential and nursing care placements as a risk, COVID-19 has highlighted the fragility and current capacity of the care market and the need to plan strategically and manage the market”

3.3 The brief explained that the review would seek to answer the question “*Are partners collaborating effectively to take account of demographic changes and other external pressures in the strategic commissioning of residential and nursing home care?*” and focused on the following key questions:

- a) Are partners collaborating effectively to take account of demographic changes and other external pressures in the strategic commissioning of residential and nursing home care?
- b) Have partners formally committed to the strategic approach to commissioning residential and nursing home care?
 - Is the strategic intent underpinned by sound data and clear workforce plans?
 - Is the strategic approach changing in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - Is the strategic approach considering the risks to the sector (for example fees, workforce, sustainability of care homes, changing demand and service quality)?
 - Is the strategic approach considering alternative forms of care?
- c) Have partners identified and secured commitment for the resources needed to deliver the strategy and is there commitment to manage these through the pooled budget arrangement?
 - Are commitments to resourcing the strategy sustainable?
 - Is there collective accountability and responsibility to deliver a strategic solution?

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- How well do partners deal with barriers (e.g. structural differences, loss of control, individual vs partner commissioning, varying standards and expectations)?
- d) Does the strategy for commissioning residential and nursing home care align with other key strategies and meet legislative requirements?
- Are partners considering alternatives other than residential and nursing home care placements?
 - Are partners working to understand and address any inappropriate regional variations (cost, contributions and access to a range of services)?
 - Can partners demonstrate consideration of key legislation as part of strategy design?
- e) Is change related to delivery of this strategy being managed and reported effectively?
- Are partnership governance structures supporting delivery?
 - Are programme management arrangements in place to deliver the strategic change required?
- 3.3 The Audit Wales team undertook Fieldwork, Document reviews, Meeting observations and Interviews with staff and service users from November 2020 to February 2021.

4. Report Detail

- 4.1 Audit Wales issued the draft final report to Local Authorities and the Health Board to comment on matters of accuracy and balance in July 2021. The Health Board prepared their own response and a collective response was prepared by the North Wales Local Authority CEOs and Directors of Social Care. They felt strongly that report was not balanced, contained some factual inaccuracies and was not fair reflection of commissioned care home placements for older people in North Wales.
- 4.2. Following further discussion with Audit Wales regarding the feedback and key objections, they prepared a revised version of the report in November 2021 which was accepted by the Local Authority Chief Executives and Directors of Social Care. Audit Wales published the North Wales report on the 16th December 2021 as per their audit schedule [see Appendix 2].
- 4.3 Audit Wales prepared a corresponding report for Welsh Government in relation to the legislative and policy framework for regional partnership working, commissioning and funding care home placements with key national messages and recommendations for Welsh Government to consider. This report for Welsh Government was not shared but was published at the same time as the North Wales report and is given in Appendix 4.
- 4.4 The Audit Wales report on the Commissioning of Older People's Care Home Placements by North Wales Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board makes 5 recommendations:

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- R1 North Wales councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board need to ensure the consistent use of pre-placement agreements across the region.
 - R2 The current approach for commissioning care home places can cause tensions between partners and result in poor value and poor service user experience. North Wales councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board need to work together to review local arrangements for commissioning care home placements to eliminate avoidable adverse impacts on service users, and each other.
 - R3 Accountability is a cornerstone of public sector decision making. Governance arrangements need to scrutinise decisions and hold decision makers to account. North Wales councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board need to strengthen their partnership governance arrangements to ensure proper accountability and effective scrutiny.
 - R4 North Wales councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board through the Regional Commissioning Board need to develop a regionally agreed care home commissioning strategy and following this, develop an associated delivery plan.
 - R5 North Wales councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board need to review their commissioning arrangements for care home placements to ensure they fulfil their statutory responsibilities around the Welsh language, and the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- 4.5 In response to the report, each of the North Wales Local Authorities and the Health Board was asked to prepare an agreed collective management response detailing how they will work collectively to address each of the recommendations. Audit Wales asked for this collective response to be submitted by 31st January 2022. The Management Response submitted is in Appendix 3.

5. Consultation and engagement

- 5.1 Audit Wales consulted with service users and providers in the research for the report. They also consulted with Local Authorities and Health Board officers on the circulation of the draft reports and took on board their feedback to inform revised drafts of the report.

6. Resource implications

- 6.1 Local and regional officer time will be required to ensure that the recommendations and management response actions are implemented.

7. Key risks

Likelihood	Almost certain	A	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Red	Red
	Likely	B	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Red	Red
	Possible	C	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Red
	Unlikely	D	Green	Green	Yellow	Orange	Orange
	Rare	E	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Orange
			5	4	3	2	1
			Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
			Impact				

Risks

Ref	Description and mitigating action	Risk score
Risk1	Officer capacity and time to implement the actions in the Management Response may delay meeting the deadlines given Mitigation: Allocated leads with dedicated time to undertake the work required	Orange
Risk2	Relationship between local commissioning plans and the required regionally agreed care home commissioning strategy and associated delivery plan. Mitigation: Mapping the relationship between local and regional plans and clarity on which aspects of the delivery plan are implemented locally and which regionally	Orange
Risk3	Failure to ensure that we fulfil statutory responsibilities around the Welsh language, and the Well-being of Future Generations Act in our care home placement provision. Mitigation: Mwy na Geiriau implementation and ensuring the Local Wellbeing Assessments and 7 Wellbeing Goals inform our commissioning plan for the future as part of the Population Needs Assessment and Market Stability Report work	Orange

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Audit Wales Project Brief for the review of the Commissioning of Older People’s Care Home Placements by North Wales Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health

Appendix 2 - The Audit Wales report on the Commissioning of Older People’s Care Home Placements by North Wales Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health [December 2021]

Appendix 3 – North Wales Local Authorities and the Health Board collective management response

Appendix 4 – Audit Wales report to Welsh Government on Care Home Commissioning [December 2021]

Background papers: None