

Report to: Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 31st January 2013

Lead Member / Officer: Lead Member for Social Care and Children's Services/Head of Adult and Business Services

Report Author: Business Service Manager

Title: Independent Care Provision – Commissioning and Monitoring

1. What is the report about?

This report is about the extent of external care provision commissioned in Denbighshire County Council and the ways in which the quality of that care is monitored.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

The Committee requested a report assessing the quality and value of independent social care provision for service users in Denbighshire.

3. What are the Recommendations?

The Committee is asked to provide observations and support the Service in its partnership working with the Independent Sector Care Providers.

4. Report details.

4.1 The balance between external and internal provision

For many years, Denbighshire County Council has externalised the majority of care provided. Appendix 1 shows the percentage of internal and external care provision. The contractual arrangements with providers have developed over those years and are more recently the subject of regional contracts.

4.2 An inclusive approach to contract monitoring

Monitoring the quality of the service provided has also changed a great deal over recent years and work continues on developing and agreeing a regional process.

The process followed to monitor quality in Denbighshire County Council collates information from many sources to maximise the effectiveness of a small Contract Team. All contact with providers whether by Social Workers, Community Care Officers, CSSIW Inspectors, Voluntary Organisations or Health colleagues is used to inform contract monitoring. Their professional

opinions and evidence are collated prior to annual contract monitoring visits. More immediate problems are dealt with as and when they arise either by writing, visiting or calling the providers in to request responses to any failure in contract compliance. In the case of care homes this can also result in multi-disciplinary Escalating Concerns meetings or Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) strategy meetings. In all cases, if providers are failing to meet required standards a temporary suspension will be placed on all new cases and existing service users will be reviewed to ensure that their needs are being met.

Contract monitoring visits were implemented 12 months ago. Before this time the Contract Team were only dealing with the procurement of services and subsequent trouble shooting the poor performance of a small minority of providers. Only now is the team finding the capacity to look at good performance and to work with providers to drive up quality. Prior to the visits the Contracts Officers collate professional opinions as previously stated. They also request a self-assessment from the providers themselves. This allows them to prioritise areas of concern during their visits.

Domiciliary Care monitoring is now being developed in a similar way. The Contracts Team already receive feedback from colleagues following care reviews. A self-assessment questionnaire has now been developed and proactive contract monitoring visits are planned to start before the end of this financial year. In the meantime, all Domiciliary Providers have been required to apply to a Regional Approved Provider List. The process involved in being approved requires each provider to input evidence of quality services. That evidence was assessed by Contracts Officers from each Local Authority. In Denbighshire 33 providers have been successful, 1 is still in the process of applying. Only 2 providers have failed the process. Those that fail or have failed to apply will receive no new work and consideration is being given to whether it is appropriate to change providers for existing service users.

During 2012/13 a new electronic system of recording Contract and quality issues has been developed and is being implemented. This will ensure that up to date information is readily available to officers as queries arise.

4.3 Listening to service users

In all cases, consideration needs to be given to the opinions and choice of the Service Users. It is often the case that Service Users are adamant that they are happy with the service they receive and are unwilling to change providers. If the quality of provision does not meet our own standards or CSSIW regulatory requirements, it is important that we work in partnership to improve the quality of service provision rather than just stop commissioning services with them. This is not only good practice but is part of Welsh Government guidance in respect of partnership working with providers.

In 2012/13 Age Concern has been funded to provide a service which goes into care homes and encourages residents to speak for themselves. They set up groups within the homes where residents can express their own opinions

of the service they receive. The service started in July 2012 and, as yet, there is little feedback but it is anticipated that reports generated by Age Concern will shortly inform contract monitoring from the residents' own perspective.

4.4 Taking action

Our experience shows that the majority of the care provided is of a good standard. 38 care home visits have been undertaken and reports written which, for the most part, have been very positive (Appendix 2). Joint work has been undertaken with CSSIW Inspectors and quality has been driven up in several homes. For example, a recent joint visit to a home which had been causing concern has seen better staffing levels, improved cleanliness, new carpets, new décor and improved activities.

In recent months issues have arisen which have caused Members to question the effectiveness of contract monitoring. Several service users have died unexpectedly. On each occasion subsequent enquiries have shown that the care provider could not have prevented the death. Lessons have undoubtedly been learned, however.

As the number of placements made into care homes reduces and as more and more people choose to stay at home rather than retire to care homes in North Wales, the viability of homes is threatened. During the last 12 months, 4 homes have been forced to close. Such closures have an impact on the workload of the team who have to monitor the process and ensure safe transfers to other care homes take place using the WG Guidance.

4.5 Developing our approach

In 2013/14 a new Reviewing Team will be developed. This will involve Community Care Officers and Contract Officers working together to review care needs and monitor quality provision for all categories of care. Regional work on contracts and service specifications will also continue to impact on the way in which contracts are monitored.

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

The contract monitoring process contributes to ensuring that vulnerable people are protected and are able to live as independently as possible.

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

Whilst the monitoring process followed in Denbighshire is cost effective, it is the case that we have a smaller Contract team than other Local Authorities in the region. Both the regional work and forthcoming changes to CSSIW working is likely to cause increased workload and higher expectations. It will be necessary to monitor the impact of these changes to ensure adequate staffing levels to meet essential work.

7. What consultations have been carried out?

When developing contract monitoring processes consultation has taken place with operational colleagues. The process involves collating information from care reviews where the opinion of the service user is also sought. The views of care providers have also been taken into account when developing the self-assessment form.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

N/A

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

The risk with a small Contract team and the anticipated changes is that priority has to be given to trouble shooting rather than proactive contract monitoring and the preventative work which can drive up quality. Managing home closures appropriately is also very resource intensive and if this trend continues it too will impact on the team's capacity. It is essential that this situation is monitored in the forthcoming year.

10. Power to make the Decision

Article 6 of the Council's Constitution

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APPENDIX 1

Externalisation of Services

Number of Service Users Receiving:	Internal	External	£ value of external provision	% of external provision
Domiciliary Care	21	651	4,001,569*	96%
Day Care/ Workops	148	49		25%
Care Homes	43 (+ 21 full payers)	510	12,121,520*	92%
Community Living	12	92	4,505,568*	88%

- These are the forecast spends for 2012/13

APPENDIX 2

Contract Monitoring January 2012 – January 2013

Service type	Contract reviews	Concerns	comments
Care Homes	38	6	3 now resolved
Domiciliary	35	2	Through regional APL process
Community Living	35	4	1 now resolved