

Report to	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	7 th September 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Elen Heaton / Nicola Stubbins Corporate Director: Social Services & Education.
Head of Service	Ann Lloyd, Head of Adult Social Care & Homelessness Service
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Title	Engagement with Care Forum Wales (CFW) & Care Providers in Denbighshire

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. To update Communities Scrutiny Committee on the Adult Social Care and Homelessness (ASCH) Services engagement with Care Forum Wales (CFW) & Care Providers in Denbighshire

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. Communities Scrutiny Committee have requested an update from the Adult Social Care and Homelessness Services on their engagement with Care Forum Wales (CFW) & Care Providers in Denbighshire

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That the Communities Scrutiny Committee confirms it has read, understood, and taken account of this report

4. Report details

4.1. Background

- 4.1.1. In September 2022 Denbighshire's Interim Head of Adult Social Care became Chair of the North Wales Regional Care Fees Group (NWRCFG).
- 4.1.2. At a meeting of North Wales Directors and 151 Officers 16th September 2022, the new Chair of the NWRCFG was tasked with producing a recommendation for North Wales Care Home fees, and for the work to be completed by November 2022. CFW actively engaged with the 2022/23 NWRCFG and facilitated a provider survey and several provider workshops aimed at gathering data to calculate the 'True Cost of Care'.
- 4.1.3. 25th March 2022 CFW withdrew from participation in, and support for the NWRCFG stating; *"Care Forum Wales is extremely disappointed with the care home fees offered by North Wales local authorities for the 2022/23" and "will therefore be withdrawing from the Group unless or until there is an absolute assurance from those in leadership positions across North Wales that our concerns will be taken seriously"*.

4.2. Engagement with Care Forum Wales

- 4.2.1. Between September 2022 and May 2023, the Chair of the NWRCFG had several informal meetings with the Chief Executive of CFW aimed at promoting a positive dialogue and encouraging her reengagement with the regional fee setting process.
- 4.2.2. 1st March 2023 Graham Boase (Chief Executive) and Nicola Stubbins (Corporate Director) met with Mario Kreft (Honorary Chair, Care Forum Wales) and Mary Wimbury (Chief Executive, Care Forum Wales). This was a constructive meeting at which both parties agreed to keep the dialogue open.

4.3. Engagement with Providers

- 4.3.1. During the 2022/23 Regional Fee setting process, CFW supported the NWRCFG to engage providers through workshops and a 'provider survey'.

- 4.3.2. While numbers were low, the provider workshops were judged successful, however the response to the provider survey was poor. Data gathered from the workshops and provider survey were limited and inconsistent.
- 4.3.3. 31st January 2023 ASCH's Contract and Commissioning Team wrote to all Care Home Providers to advise them of the proposed 2023/24, invite their feedback and offer them the opportunity to engage in an 'open book accounting exercise' if they believed the proposed rate was insufficient for them to provide the required level of care and support.
- 4.3.4. Between March and July 2023, 12 providers met ASCH to conduct open book exercises and 5 providers engaged via email. In addition, a number of providers wrote to the ASCH Contracts and Commissioning Team advising they would not accept the Denbighshire rate, and if their alternative proposal was not accepted, they would give notice on placements.
- 4.3.5. Care Brokers in the ASCH Contracts and Commissioning Team contact care home providers every week to gather data on bed availability.
- 4.3.6. Care Brokers in the ASCH Contracts and Commissioning Team have regular contact with care home providers when arranging individual placements.
- 4.3.7. It is proposed to take a more proactive approach to engaging with providers in the fee setting process for 2024 / 2025. A programme of visits is being planned by ASCH Management in partnership with commissioning staff from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) to have open dialogue about the cost of care and ensure providers are involved in the fee setting process.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

- 5.1. **A prosperous Denbighshire** – the care home market in Denbighshire employs a significant number of people right across the county, as well as buying in goods and services, often from local suppliers and businesses.
- 5.2. **A healthier, happy, caring Denbighshire** - maintaining a buoyant care home market in Denbighshire is essential to providing good quality care at a fair price

for older people within the county. Thus allowing older citizens to live safely and happily with the right support when they need it.

5.3. **A better connected Denbighshire** – with care homes located right across the county, they are often in the heart of our local communities, therefore, allowing older people to receive care and support close to their families and in an area they are familiar with.

5.4. **A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language** – the care sector in Denbighshire is supporting this theme by providing services in Welsh and ensuring the local culture and history is central to activities to engage older people, especially those with dementia.

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

6.1. Care fee negotiations and annual uplifts taking into account inflation, rises in National Minimum Wage / Real Living Wage can have a significant impact on the Adult Social Care and Homelessness budget. It is important therefore that annual care fees are seen as being fair to care providers but are reasonable within our budgetary restraints.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. A well-being impact assessment is not required for this report as it is for information only

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

8.1. Care fees are agreed at Cabinet on an annual basis and this typically happens in quarter 3 or 4, ready for implementation at the start of the new financial year.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. As stated in Section 6 the annual increase in care fees is a key pressure for the Council. Any increase above the 3% increase in funding we are expecting from WG will cause pressures that will need to be funded from either further raising Council Tax or finding further savings across the Council.

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

10.1. There is a risk that by not engaging with care providers and Care Forum Wales we are not getting the providers views and experiences on the true cost of care, they become disengaged and are more likely not to accept the care fees we set. We are planning a programme of visits to care homes to proactively engage them in the care fee setting process for 2024 – 2025.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Local authorities and health boards are responsible under section 14 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to jointly undertake an assessment of the needs for care and support, and the support needs of carers, in their area.

11.2. Section 56 of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA) I inserted section 144B into the 2014 Act requiring local authorities to produce a local market stability report.