

SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
3rd JULY 2015

4. HYWEL DDA INFORMATION & CONSULTATION STRATEGY FOR CARERS – ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

The Chair welcomed Peter Llewellyn (Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships, Hywel Dda University Health Board) to the meeting.

The Committee considered the Hywel Dda University Health Board's Information & Consultation Strategy for Carers Annual Report for 2014/15. The Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships gave a brief presentation, outlining the work undertaken during 2014/15 and the key challenges and priorities for 2015/16. The presentation focused on the work of the following groups and initiatives:

- Strategy Implementation Group
- Investors in Carers
- Information Sub-Group
- Young Carers
- Training Group / Carer Aware E-Learning Module
- Performance Monitoring
- Mental Health and Learning Disabilities

The following issues were discussed during consideration of this item:

The repealing of the Carers Measure and the impact of new legislation on the Health Board's future responsibilities in relation to carers was discussed and it was asked why the measure was established in the first place. The Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships informed the Committee that the measure had originally been introduced to give guidance to the National Health Service in Wales on engaging with carers. However, with the increase in legislation currently proposed by the Welsh Government (e.g. Future Generations Bill and Health & Well Being Act), Ministers were seeing this as an opportunity to repeal the old measure. Officers were concerned that with the loss of the measure, specific support for carers would be lost in the new legislation.

The difficulties faced by young carers were discussed and clarification was sought as to the type of support provided for carers in this age group. The Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships acknowledged that this was a key group and that it was essential to try and identify individuals in order to establish intervention and support for them as soon as possible. The Health Board and its partners worked with a variety of agencies including schools and school nursing services in order to identify young carers. Support for young carers included providing short breaks so that they could concentrate on their studies or spend time with friends. It was thought that there were approximately 1,000 young carers in Carmarthenshire although in reality it was likely that the figure was greater.

In response to a suggestion that school governors should receive training on the needs of young carers, the Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships stated that the Health Board would continue to work with schools via Head Teacher Forums to highlight the needs of young carers and how schools could assist in supporting them. He welcomed the suggestion and agreed to include this in future work programmes.

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The Committee welcomed the progress outlined in the report but expressed concern at the proposed loss of the Carers Measure funding worth £130,900 from April 2016 and the resulting impact on the current fixed term posts and Young Carer services. It was suggested that the reduction in funding would have a detrimental impact on the current work being undertaken and that the Executive Board should be asked to lobby the Welsh Government to stress the importance of this resource and request that it should not be cut. The Committee agreed to the proposal.

In response to a further question on the overall funding allocation being reduced in 2014/15, the Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships informed the Committee that it been necessary to revisit the initial Implementation Plan halfway through the year. This had resulted in a number of key aims being reduced and revised. This had impacted on the planned development of a comprehensive Carers Outreach Service and employment of a dedicated Project Support Officer to take forward the Young Carers agenda.

The role of neighbours undertaking a 'caring' role, especially in rural areas was highlighted and it was asked how they were supported. The Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships stated that an individual assisting an elderly or frail neighbour could be registered as a carer via their GP (subject to agreement from the individual and their family) and in turn receive the relevant support for carers.

In response to a question on how funding for carers was allocated to other Health Boards, the Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships confirmed that funding was allocated according to population and that this did disadvantage the rural counties with smaller populations which were spread out over large areas.

Clarification was sought as to the age of those young carers known to the Health Board and Social Services. The Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships informed the Committee that the statistics included in the report covered young carers up to 18 years old but that there were some as young as 7-8 who were known to the Health Board and its partners. He agreed to circulate more information about young carers to the Committee.

It was asked whether the pilot undertaken by the pharmacy at Wthybush Hospital to include Carers Information leaflets in all 'take home' medicine bags for discharge medicines, would be rolled out to all hospitals within the Hywel Dda region. The Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships stated that this scheme was going to be extended across all pharmacy sites during the year ahead following the successful pilot in Haverfordwest.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

4.1 The report be endorsed.

4.2 The Executive Board be requested to lobby the Welsh Government to stress the importance of the Carers Measure funding and to request that it not be cut from April 2016 onwards.