

Regional Arrangements for Pooled Funds and Service Integration

Background

Part 9 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act stipulates a requirement for councils and local health boards to establish and maintain pooled funds in relation to:

- The exercise of their adult care home accommodation (residential and nursing) functions (by 6th April 2018)
- The exercise of their family support functions
- Specified functions exercised jointly in response to Population Assessments, where such arrangements are considered appropriate

Integrating services and establishing pooled funds are among a number of strategic priorities adopted by the West Wales Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and a range of supporting workstreams are being advanced through the West Wales Care Partnership.

This report outlines progress, and proposals, in respect of: 1) adult care home placements; 2) family support functions; and 3) integrated community equipment stores.

1) Adult care homes

Given the legislative deadline of 6th April 2018 for establishing pooled fund arrangements for adult care homes, this area of work has been an early priority for the Partnership. Initially the work focuses on older people.

Statutory Guidance makes clear that pooled funds should be part of a wider range of integrated commissioning arrangements and, accordingly, significant work is being undertaken to achieve this, including:

- The establishment of a **single regional Contract** and service specification for older people's care homes, informed by a [regional Market Position Statement for Older people's Services](#) and supported by common policies and an integrated approach to contract monitoring and quality assurance. The Contract will be fully reflective of the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and will be subject to consultation with providers in early 2018.
- The Contract will provide a basis for **further integration of commissioning** functions over time, building on the integrated commissioning structure already established across Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire with plans to extend this further across the region for Health and Social Care. These arrangements will bring significant benefits to providers in terms of a more consistent approach from commissioners and to users in relation to the quality of services provided.

- **Streamlined decision-making** across health and social care to ensure equitable funding decisions and timely transfers of care.

A **'virtual' regional budget for older people's care homes** will also be established for 2018-19, supported by robust and integrated reporting mechanisms, which will enable the tracking of spend by each of the partner organisations. This will lead to enhanced clarity over demand and spend, thus informing future financial modelling and commissioning activity. For the first year of operation, the budget will include externally commissioned placements only. Under the proposed model, money will not transfer between partner agencies, thus:

- Eliminating the risk of cross-subsidy between the NHS and local government and between Local Authority areas
- Removing a potentially considerable administrative burden were agencies to pay into and receive funding from the pool on a regular basis and the eradicating the likely need of individual agencies to borrow to pay up-front into the pooled fund, due to retrospective monthly payment of the RSG by Welsh Government.

These virtual arrangements, (developed in full consultation with Directors of Finance from each of the statutory partner agencies), will inform the intention to introduce a fully-operational pooled fund for the region from 2019-20. Welsh Government has been asked to provide expert advisory and technical support to assist this process. Over the same period, the opportunity will be taken to extend arrangements to cover internally provided services and care homes for younger adults (including people with Learning Disability).

The proposed incremental approach aligns with a Statement to the Assembly made by the former Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans AM on 10 October 2017 in which she acknowledged the challenges faced by regions in fully implementing the requirements by April 2018, but indicated that direct intervention would only be considered by Welsh Government in the event of non-compliance by April 2019. It is understood that the Regional approach is broadly consistent with proposed arrangements elsewhere in Wales.

2) Arrangements for family support functions.

Part 9 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 specifies that pooled fund arrangements must be established in respect of 'family support functions'. It has been agreed that arrangements will be initially established for pooling funds for Integrated Family Support Teams (IFSTs).

IFSTs provide a preventative service that promotes positive family relationships and are in place in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys. Hosted by each respective local authority, each Team has staff seconded from the relevant health organisation - Hywel Dda University Health Board or Powys Teaching Health Board.

Existing arrangements work well, with teams responsive to county circumstances; while co-ordination of reporting, and sharing of good practice, at a regional level supports efficient service delivery.

In response to the requirements of Part 9, the four councils and 2 health boards are agreeing arrangements for further integration which will involve Ceredigion County Council undertaking the following on behalf of the partners:

- Hosting the budget for employing health staff on behalf of each IFST
- Undertaking the commissioning arrangements for these health staff
- Regional co-ordination, including:
 - Reporting requirements (to the RPB and Welsh Government)
 - Organisation and delivery of regional training
 - Supporting meetings of regional practitioners to facilitate sharing of practice and expertise.

It is proposed that the IFST regional co-ordination meeting will take on responsibility for governance of the arrangement, within the broader context of the West Wales Care Partnership structure and with clear reporting lines to the RBP itself.

3) Arrangements for community equipment stores

A review is underway to consider the position of the joint community equipment stores in place in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. These stores are a partnership between Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDdUHB) and each respective council. The review is a response to an acknowledged divergence in practice, which gives rise to inconsistency of provision. This poses service equity concerns given each operates with the footprint of HDdUHB.

Initial research has shown divergence in terms of Health Board and Council financial contributions, and an increasing reliance of stores on Intermediate Care Fund (ICF) allocations. Further inconsistencies arise in relation to the types of equipment provided, prescriber practices, ordering processes and service levels.

The Review Group is tasked with:

- Exploring opportunities for an integrated approach to joint equipment stores across west Wales, including consistent standards, pathways and practice.
- Exploring the feasibility of different delivery mechanisms.
- Exploring the feasibility of a single pooled funding arrangement for the Region.
- Reviewing commissioning to ensure equity, consistency & efficiency of access.

An options appraisal is underway to consider options for regional integration, and proposals – which could include the development of a single regional service with attendant pooled fund - will be brought forward in the near future.

Partnership Agreements

Formal Partnership Agreements will be developed to support each of the above arrangements. Agreements in respect of care homes and IFSTs will be brought for consideration and sign-off by statutory partners in March 2018.

Recommendations

Organisations are asked to endorse, in-principle, the Regional approach to:

- Pooled funds for care homes;
- Pooled funds for Integrated Family Support Services;
- Reviewing community equipment stores