

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

30 SEPTEMBER 2022

AUDIT WALES REPORT: DIRECT PAYMENTS FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Recommendations / key decisions required:

1. To consider the findings and recommendations of the Audit Wales national report.
2. To approve the Carmarthenshire County Council response to the recommendations of the national report relevant to the Council.

Reasons:

We have a duty to consider and where appropriate respond to regulatory report recommendations.

Cabinet Decision Required: NO

Council Decision Required: NO

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Cllr Jane Tremlett

Directorate: Communities

Designations:

Email addresses:

Name of Head of Service:
Alex Williams

Head of Integrated
Services

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

AUDIT WALES REPORT: DIRECT PAYMENTS FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE

This national report looks at how Direct Payments are helping people to live independently. Direct Payments are an alternative to local-authority-arranged care or support and can help meet an individual's or a carer's need. They aim to give people more choice, greater flexibility and more control over the support they get.

The report looks at how Direct Payments help sustain people's well-being and whether they are improving quality of life. It also looks at how local authorities manage and encourage take up of Direct Payments and whether these services present value for money.

Whilst the report assesses the current position in relation to direct payments, it does not address any of their shortcomings. There is a national policy drive to increase direct payments, but a failure to recognise in the report that direct payments are not always the right option in all cases. In many cases, a direct payment will allow someone to have greater control and choice of the way in which they meet their assessed needs, but a direct payment also brings added responsibility on the person in terms of sometimes needing to be an employer and also taking responsibility when care arrangements fall down unexpectedly at short notice. For some, this added responsibility brings additional pressure and stress and a commissioned service might actually be the best option.

In addition, direct payments can at times have the unintended consequence of affecting the stability of an already fragile market as providers can charge higher prices using a direct payment and they can be used to circumnavigate normal commissioning routes. From a Carmarthenshire perspective, it is therefore disappointing to note that some of the challenges and shortcomings related to direct payments were not noted in the National Audit Office review.

The report makes 10 recommendations in total as follows.

To ensure people know about Direct Payments, how to access these services and are encouraged to take them up it is recommended that local authorities:

- R1.** Review public information in discussion with service users and carers to ensure it is clear, concise and fully explains what they need to know about Direct Payments.
- R2.** Undertake additional promotional work to encourage take up of Direct Payments.
- R3.** Ensure advocacy services are considered at the first point of contact to provide independent advice on Direct Payments to service users and carers.

To ensure Direct Payments are consistently offered it is recommended that local authorities:

R4. Ensure information about Direct Payments is available at the front door to social care and are included in the initial discussion on the available care options for service users and carers.

R5. Provide training to social workers on Direct Payments to ensure they fully understand their potential and feel confident promoting it to service users and carers.

To ensure there is sufficient Personal Assistant capacity, we recommend that local authorities through the All-Wales local authority Direct Payments Forum and with Social Care Wales:

R6. Work together to develop a joint Recruitment and Retention Plan for Personal Assistants.

To ensure services are provided equitably and fairly it is recommended that local authorities and the Welsh Government:

R7. Clarify policy expectations in plain accessible language and set out:

- what Direct Payments can pay for;
- how application and assessment processes, timescales and review processes work;
- how monitoring individual payments and the paperwork required to verify payments will work;
- how unused monies are to be treated and whether they can be banked;
- how to administer and manage pooled budgets.

It is recommended that the Welsh Government:

R8. Ensure that people who receive both NHS continuing healthcare and Direct Payments have greater voice, choice and control in decision making.

To effectively manage performance and be able to judge the impact and value for money of Direct Payments, we recommend that local authorities and the Welsh Government

R9. Work together to establish a system to fully evaluate Direct Payments that captures all elements of the process – information, promotion, assessing, managing and evaluating impact on wellbeing and independence.

R10. Annually publish performance information for all elements of Direct Payments to enable a whole system view of delivery and impact to support improvement.

A Carmarthenshire Action Plan response has been prepared for the recommendations relevant to local government and is attached with these papers.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES:

- 1 Audit Wales Report**
- 2 Carmarthenshire Action Plan response**

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: Alex Williams, Head of Integrated Services

| Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities | Legal | Finance | ICT | Risk Management Issues | Staffing Implications | Physical Assets |
|---|-------|---------|------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| YES | NONE | NONE | NONE | NONE | NONE | NONE |

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

Corporate Strategy

The report's recommendations support the Corporate Strategy and our Well-being Objective - 'Support older people to age well and maintain dignity and independence in their later years'

Regulatory Reports

- National/Thematic reports are undertaken by regulators to look at all councils in Wales (in an integrated programme of work consulted and agreed upon with local government) to identify best practice.
 - Most of these reports contain recommendations. Sometimes the recommendations are for Welsh Government and/or local government.
 - Not all recommendations contained in reports may apply to Carmarthenshire as in some instances we could be the area of best practice proposed, be already doing what is identified or it may not be applicable.
- All regulatory report recommendations are entered onto the Council's performance monitoring system (PIMS) and any reasons for discounting recommendations should be explained and recorded. Progress against recommendations is monitored and reported.
- All regulatory reports will now be considered by Corporate Management Team, Cabinet, Governance and Audit Committee and where appropriate relevant scrutiny committees.

Governance and Audit Committee

- The role of the Governance and Audit Committee is to review and assess the risk management, internal control, performance management and corporate governance arrangements of the Council, it is expected that the Council's Governance and Audit Committee formally consider all reports of external review bodies – principally; Audit Wales, Estyn and the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).
- As well as actively considering reports, committees are expected to assure themselves that there are arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate progress against any recommendations contained in them. The focus here should be on holding executives and officers to account to ensure that reports and recommendations have been acted upon.

Scrutiny

- Some reports may also be relevant for consideration by scrutiny committees.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Alex Williams, Head of Integrated Services

1. Local Member(s) – N/A
2. Community / Town Council – N/A
3. Relevant Partners

Audit Wales completed the review between September 2020 and February 2022.

It used a range of methods:

- **Document review:** it reviewed Welsh Government, Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru and Social Care Wales documentation, guidance and announcements; local authority policy documentation and cabinet and committee papers; a range of materials on approaches for management of Direct Payments in England; and reports and information published by research bodies including the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Kings Fund and Think Local Act Personal.
- **Local authority interviews;** it interviewed staff from Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Newport, Powys, Torfaen and Wrexham councils with responsibility for direct payments.
- **Interviews with national bodies:** it interviewed of Social Workers Cymru, Social Care Wales, Disability Wales, UK Home Care Association, Care Forum Wales, Wales Co-op Centre, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission Cymru, Wales School of Social Care Research, the Welsh Government, British Deaf Association and Think Local Act Personal.
- **Focus groups:** it held three on-line focus groups with members of the All-Wales Direct Payments Forum made up of officers from each of the 22 Welsh local authorities with management responsibility for Direct Payments. In each of the focus groups, attendees completed a survey and Wales Audit held facilitated discussions.
- **Surveys:** two surveys were undertaken
 - a commissioned telephone survey of service users and carers receiving Direct Payments. A total of 1,028 people from a database of 4,650 valid contacts were surveyed, with 71% completed via telephone and the remainder submitting online survey forms.
 - a survey of individuals and agencies paid via Direct Payments to provide care and support to adults in need. It received a total of 166 responses, and these came from all 22 local authority areas, with 3% of responses completed in Welsh.

**CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO
HOLDER AWARE / CONSULTED?**

YES
Cllr. Jane Tremlett

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

| Title of Document | File Ref No. | Locations that the papers are available for public inspection |
|---|--------------|---|
| <u>Direct Payments for Adult Social Care</u> <u>Taliadau Uniongyrchol ar gyfer Gofal Cymdeithasol i Oedolion</u> | | Links to location on Audit Wales website |