
Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 10.30am in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 10 January 2019

Present:

County Councillors:

M Maddocks (Chairman)

J Baker

G Butland

J Chandler

M Durham

B Egan

J Henry

P May

M McEwan

R Pratt

P Reid

C Souter

R Carsen - Education co-optee.

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer, were also present throughout.

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report on Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received and noted. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Lumley.

No declarations of interest were made.

2 Minutes

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public

4. Relationship Management

The Committee considered report PAF/01/19 comprising additional information requested from the Head of Procurement as a result of discussions at the previous meeting. Councillor Chris Whitbread, Deputy Cabinet Member, and Nick Presmeg, Executive Director Adult Social Care, joined the meeting to respond to both advance questions set by the Committee and subsequent questioning.

Background

A review of supplier relationships had been undertaken by County Council Officers and a report published in November 2016 with a number of recommendations and actions to improve those relationships. The Committee had held two discussions with the Head of Procurement over the past six months to ascertain progress and had now requested a further discussion on the extent of executive oversight and leadership for the issues raised in the November 2016 report.

The following was acknowledged, highlighted or suggested during subsequent discussion:

Oversight

- The Deputy Cabinet Member considered that there had been an improvement in provider relationships;
- Executive oversight of provider relationship issues was through Mr Presmeg's reporting line direct to the Chief Executive. The Head of Procurement was part of Mr Presmeg's team.
- There were regular monthly meetings between the Executive Director ASC and the Cabinet Member which included discussion on provider relationship issues.
- There were now regular meetings between the Deputy Cabinet Member, Executive Director Adult Social Care and key leaders from the market;

New framework agreement

- A new framework agreement for residential care providers would come onstream in June. The agreement would reduce the need for ECC to pay higher spot purchasing rates. There could be some providers who would not be able to meet the criteria for entering into the new agreement and, whilst ECC would offer advice to those providers, the criteria was included in the contract to ensure fit and proper providers and maintain quality and safety. It was stressed that, generally, the contract criteria being set was a market standard.

Maintaining quality

- There was an escalation process for unmet care needs which generally led to finding placements for those clients within 48 hours.
- There was significant reliance on service users to provide feedback on service quality although there were other mechanisms and processes that could also monitor service quality - particularly through ECC's Quality Improvement Teams.

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- Providers were expected to have good work management systems in place as they had a duty to inform commissioners if they were unable to fulfil appointments and contractual and statutory duties.
 - Service complaints were monitored by ECC's Quality Teams with an escalation process for serious safety and safeguarding issues that could go through to ECCs Corporate Management Team. Corrective actions/expectations can be set in consultation with the CQC.
 - Other mechanisms were being developed to monitor service quality including electronic monitoring of carer visits to homes which could provide data on work patterns to help inform and define smarter working.

Capacity

- The Care Act required a healthy and diverse care market for all and not just those funded by a local authority. It was considered that there was adequate supply both for those self-funding and ECC funded. ECC could offer enhancements to providers where necessary to target extra resource.
- As part of encouraging better staff retention, ECC was specifically looking to offer better training programmes to providers and support personal development opportunities.
- Continued workforce shortages might require, where appropriate and safe to do so, to move away from hands-on care towards some more remote and less intrusive forms of support such as Telecare. However, it was acknowledged that a care visit could also provide important social and conversational stimulation for the client.
- The focus on personalisation and increasing personal choice might not closely align with the business models of some providers.
- ECC had responded to the financial concerns at Allied Healthcare by ensuring continuity of care for clients with the majority of the contracts transferred into Essex Cares and some domiciliary care packages were re-tendered.

Market strategy

- ECC would be publishing a refreshed market strategy as part of an updated Business Plan for Adult Social Care in summer 2019. A Statement of Account for Adult Social Care would also be published.
- The Market Strategy had been developed by the same team in Procurement who had identified improvement actions for ECC's relationship with providers. The team had worked with the market in developing the strategy.

Conclusion

The Chairman thanked Councillor Whitbread and Mr Presmeg for their attendance. The following actions were agreed:

Further information would be provided on:

- (i) suspended invoices and whether the suspension was for the full invoice amount or only the relevant part of it that was being queried;
- (ii) the number of residents supported by ECC in care homes that were subsequently assessed by the Care Quality Commission as inadequate and how long it took to remedy the situation (i.e. replacing the clients in other care homes) and the lessons learnt;
- (iii) whether there was particular criteria within the new framework agreement which were proving difficult for some providers to meet;

It was **agreed** that the committee would have the opportunity to comment on a draft of the refreshed market strategy in advance of publication.

5. Essex Education Services

The Committee considered and noted report PAF/02/19.

6. Member Updates

There were no member updates.

7. Work Programme

The committee considered and noted report PAF/04/19.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Committee activity day was scheduled for Thursday 14 February 2019 which may be held in public, be a private session, briefing or site visit – to be confirmed nearer the time.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.40 am.

Chairman