

Cheshire West and Chester Council

## Future of Adult Social Care Commission

Workforce and Technology

29 March 2022

### Commissioners:

Cllr Val Armstrong, Gary Cliffe (CWVA), Cllr Gina Lewis, Cllr Keith Millar, Cllr Lynn Riley

### Apologies:

Alison Lee (ICP), Cllr Gillian Edwards, Charlotte Walton (Cheshire West and Chester)

### Attendees:

Lynne Turnbull (Disability Positive), Andrew Burridge (North West Association of Directors of Adult Social Services), Daniel Masters (I Care Group), Fiona O'Reilly (Knowsley Council), Kath McEvoy (Alder Hey Hospital)

Gavin Butler, Lee Calvert, Del Curtis, Amy Lavery, and Morgan Jones (Cheshire West and Chester Council)

### Observers:

The names of those who attended the meeting to observe have not been recorded

### Meeting Notes

The full recording of the meeting is available by [clicking here](#). Links to each presentation are included in the notes rather than summarised.

## 1. Welcome and notes of last meeting

Cllr Armstrong welcomed all to the meeting and reminded commissioners of the discussion points from the previous meeting.

## 2. Public Speaking Time

There were no requests to speak.

## 3. Local Experiences of Adult Social Care

Lynne Turnbull, from Disability Positive, gave [a presentation](#) on the use of personal assistants (PA) and shared three case studies and [a video](#):

Alexis

- Has a PA for practical tasks but also social and emotional support.
- Recruitment can be stressful – particularly so during COVID19.
- The personal connection and relationship is the most important factor in choosing a PA, but also empathy, flexibility, openness and driving skills.
- Challenges are around recruitment and retention, wages, opening up your home and managing the sometimes differing values of her and her mother.
- The world becomes smaller without a PA, and her voice becomes quieter.

Sue

- Employed PA's for twelve years for personal care and social support.
- Becoming increasingly hard to recruit good Pas – personality is the key trait.
- Huge advantage to building a relationship with a PA rather than using agencies.
- Key difficulty is matching the wages that PAs can earn elsewhere.

James and Nick

- Interdependent partners who both have learning difficulties, low self-esteem and have immense difficulties managing social situations.
- Had direct payments for two years and having a PA has made an incredible difference to their lives – one of the best things that has happened to them.
- Recruiting a PA is incredibly difficult, needing someone with a long list of qualities as well as 'the connection'. Qualifications are irrelevant.
- The fixed rate of pay can impact on retaining good staff.
- Disability Positive support on the employment and pay activities but the PA is employed by James' mother and it is not clear how this will be done if she becomes unable to do so.

Discussion focused on:

- Referring everyone being assessed for care to the direct payment support service would encourage more people to take on direct payments, as would training for social workers to promote their understanding and encourage them to be positive about PAs.
- Most people employing a PA use a payroll provider and have support for the transactional employment issues.
- The relationship between an individual and their PA is key and makes recruitment particularly complex.
- The pay for PAs has been fixed for ten years – it used to be competitive but is now just above the minimum wage.
- It is hard to define PAs as self-employed in terms of the HMRC.

#### 4. Recruitment and Retention of the Social Care Workforce

Andrew Burridge gave a presentation on [common workforce issues across the North West](#). Jane Marshall and Gavin Butler presented on [how the Council are working to recruit and retain staff](#). Dan Master from ICare spoke about the issues that providers currently have:

- One in five care vacancies are not being filled; pay is the key factor and the greatest proportion of provider costs.
- 192 staff left ICare over the last twelve months. Pay and conditions are worse than elsewhere. 85 new staff joined but 12 left in their first week.
- ICare pay the highest salaries of any provider in Cheshire West.
- Spent £20k on recruitment advertising in the last six months.
- Have had to give back contracts in five authority areas – first time in 28 years.
- Other providers are facing the same issues. It's a crisis.
- The Council's reablement team consistently has approx. 10 vacancies and find recruitment difficult.

Commissioners discussion focused on:

- Difficulties that all sectors are having in recruitment and retention.
- How do we find different ways of working as there are no easy fixes.
- The need to recruit as locally as possible – at a micro level.
- The need to offer flexible working patterns – a day a week.
- Consider how we can build on what we already do with the University of Chester.
- Andrew Burridge offered to circulate the [Delegated Healthcare Interventions Guide from Skills from Care](#) and the Career Academy Toolkit produced by the North West Association of Directors of Adult Social Services.

## 5. Harnessing the opportunities of technology

Fiona O'Reilly and Kath McEvoy presented on some [new technological approaches being taken across the Cheshire and Merseyside region](#). Lee Calvert presented on [piloting technologies within Cheshire West](#)

Discussion focused on:

- Examples of digital innovation in Liverpool e.g. 5G on lampposts near care homes and record sharing on Liquid Logic.
- Collective buying power for technology across the region.
- Sefton's development of an e-learning programme for the region.
- Enthusiasm for remote health monitoring as a way of supporting people to remain independent. Interest in the cost benefit analysis.
- Potential to use volunteers rather than clinicians for the support that is triggered by remote monitoring.
- The potential to use technology to defer the point at which people have to give up some level of independence and also access more expensive services.
- How to approach decision making differently whilst acting within the Councils procurement rules and processes make it easier to 'try things'
- Need to make an investment pot available to pilot projects in the knowledge that not all of them will work
- Acknowledgement that a cultural change is needed for some staff, potential users of digital equipment and their carers. Needs to be considered in recruitment of staff
- The potential to give people their own information and allow them to own their own care record and choose who they share it with.
- How do we move from a digital strategy to a smart and digitally enabled technology strategy including wearables and other tech
- We don't only want to catch up with what others are already doing, but stay at the forefront.