

**Minutes of the West Berkshire Council's
Disability External Scrutiny Board
Meeting 26th July 2012**

Item	Notes
Board Members in attendance	Jan Rothwell (Chair), Mick Hutchins, Keith Hester, Sue Hinks, Kate Green
Others	Councillor Pamela Bale, Councillor Joe Mooney, Jo England (Client Financial Services Manager) June Graves (Head of Care Commissioning, Housing, Safeguarding), Tandra Forster (Contracts and Commissioning Manager), Jo Johns (Contracts and Commissioning Officer), Jason Teal (Performance, Research & Consultation Manager), Elaine Walker (Principal Policy Officer), John Holt.
1. Introduction and apologies.	<p>The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, and reminded the Board of the need to allow everyone to speak during the meeting if they wish to. If anyone has issues they would like to raise between meetings, these should be sent to Elaine Walker for inclusion on a future agenda.</p> <p>JR also noted that there would be some slight rearrangement of the agenda in order to accommodate apologies and availability of information.</p> <p>Apologies: There were apologies received from Alan Fleming (Vice-Chair), John Carr and Jan Evans (Head of Adult Social Care)</p>
2. Minutes and Matters Arising.	<p>The draft minutes of the meeting held on 26th April 2012 were approved as a true and correct record.</p> <p>The response to actions arising from the previous meeting were circulated to the Board. Additional updates were received regarding:</p> <p>3 - Elaine Cox to provide some information to Elaine Walker regarding the London Blind Ramblers, and Walking to</p>

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	<p>Health for circulation to the Board.</p> <p>SH advised that she had enquired about the Walking to Health Scheme, and had been told that it was being reviewed financially.</p> <p>Action 1: EW to find more information about the financial review of Walking to Health and circulate what this means for the scheme.</p> <p>MH informed the group of an organisation called Enrych that matches disabled people with volunteers to enable them to undertake leisure activities and gain independence. Enrych is trying to expand into West Berkshire and interested people will be welcomed. The West Berkshire Independent Living Network (WBILN) is working to promote Enrych in the area. For more information, contact Mick Hutchins or WBILN.</p> <p>8 – Councillor Bale informed the group that Councillor David Betts had passed responsibility for Highways issues to Councillor Keith Chopping. No issues had been raised by voluntary groups, so no meeting had been arranged, however this would be monitored.</p>
<p>3. Update on Welfare Benefit Changes</p>	<p>Jo England updated the Board on the changes taking place as a result of the Welfare Reform Programme. Detailed information is attached as a separate document.</p> <p>The changes predominantly affect working age people. The Department of Work and Pensions changes include Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments (PIP). The West Berkshire Council changes include the Council Tax Support Scheme and Social Fund.</p> <p>Some key items to note are:</p> <p>Universal Credit – a default practice will be put in place of single monthly electronic payments, however there will be circumstances that allow a return to weekly or fortnightly payments. Negotiations are currently taking place to agree who will support users with the electronic system.</p> <p>It is expected, although not confirmed, that people who have not yet transferred to ESA, may transfer directly to Universal Credit.</p> <p>SH requested that consideration be given to alternative format documents when consulting with users.</p>

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	<p>Action 2: All to send any questions about welfare benefit changes to EW who will pass them to Jo England</p> <p>Action 3: EW to check prior to each meeting whether there is an update available.</p>
<p>4. Changes to Social Care progress report and update on personal budgets</p>	<p>This item was not discussed.</p>
<p>5. EIA Consultation – proposed changes to residential care in West Berkshire and domiciliary care</p>	<p>June Graves presented information to support a consultation on the proposed changes to residential care in West Berkshire. The full presentation is attached as a separate document.</p> <p>June Graves explained that many of the provisions within the policy were already being carried out, and that this policy would formalise them dependent on the results of the consultation. The proposed policy does not have any impact on eligibility, just on where people are placed. June Graves stressed that the individual circumstances of all cases would continue to be fully considered to take into account the proximity of family to placements.</p> <p>Mick Hutchins asked why more residential homes weren't being built within West Berkshire if there was a shortage as they provided local employment. June Graves responded that the Council does plan a certain amount of development in order to generate more capacity for the greater numbers of older people expected in the area, noting in particular schemes in Thatcham and Hungerford. However she advised that the Council was cautious of encouraging the development of buildings that may not be of use in the future whilst there were appropriate places close by albeit over the border.</p> <p>Councillor Bale informed the group that the Council's Core Strategy had been approved and this reduced the level of development at which affordable housing must be included. The core strategy can be viewed by following the below link.</p> <p>http://www.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=31506&p=0</p> <p>Mick Hutchins was concerned that by driving down costs, the level of quality of care would follow. Tandra Forster replied that consideration of a person's basic needs places some importance on providing activities for people, but people may wish to top up their payments to provide for their own lifestyle choices which may be above those</p>

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	<p>provided as basic. June Graves advised that the Council has been shown to have a high regard for quality, and this is not going to be compromised.</p> <p>The consultation on this subject ends on 31 August 2012. If anyone would like to respond, please send your response direct to Joanne John, or use the consultation finder web pages found by following this link: click here</p> <p>Action 4: June Graves to return and inform the Board of progress at a future meeting.</p>
<p>6. Consultation process</p>	<p>Jason Teal presented the consultation process that is used within West Berkshire Council. A copy of the presentation is attached as a separate document.</p> <p>The Board raised a number of issues around accessibility and feedback making the points that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If disabled people are not able to access the consultation information, they will not be able to respond. In particular, when letters are sent out, an audio version should be sent to those who are known to have visual impairments - Disabled people perceive that their feedback is not taken into account when decisions are being made and may therefore withdraw from the consultation process altogether <p>John Holt and MH spoke of consultations that they (and John Holt's wife) had taken part in where they felt the process had not been followed properly. In particular the consultations did not set out sufficient information to be able to provide a considered response; it was not clear what decision was being made; there was inconsistent feedback to those who had been consulted, and it was not apparent how responses had been considered in relation to the decision being made; mitigating activity was not appropriate for the needs of the person being offered.</p> <p>Jason Teal reiterated that the point of a consultation is to inform a decision. Consultation responses are presented to the decision maker, and are used to help understand whether the decision should be made.</p> <p>John Holt said that risk needed to be considered as well as volume. It was not appropriate to count votes for or against, but to consider the impact of the decision and act accordingly.</p> <p>MH questioned how much information was available to those making decisions.</p>

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	<p>Councillor Joe Mooney responded that Councillors take into account all responses to consultations, but that all decisions were being taken in a climate of limited resources. He recognised that it was not possible to make a decision that suits everyone, but that information was used to inform the decisions made. He informed the group that despite two judicial reviews, the Council's consultations had been found to be proper and the decisions fair. He concluded that in moving forward it was important to ensure that consultations were carried out early enough to allow feedback to be fully considered.</p> <p>June Graves asked whether the detailed letter that had been prepared for another consultation regarding care homes, had been useful. MH responded that it had.</p> <p>The group discussed the benefits of the letter and the conflict of providing enough useful information, and keeping the information concise and understandable.</p> <p>JR summarised the outcomes of the discussion as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing consultations in an accessible format - starting the process early - feeding back to consultees so that they can see how their comments have been used.
7. Equality Objectives	<p>The equality objectives have not yet been agreed for circulation. They will be circulated as soon as they are available.</p>
8. AOB	<p>JR advised the group that one application form to join the Board had been received and this had come from the Chief Executive of Mencap. The group discussed the merits of including an organisation viewpoint on the Board as opposed to the personal, service user perspective that currently exists. The Board recognised the wealth of knowledge that an organisation could bring, but did not wish to dilute what is one of the more powerful ways for an individual service user to influence the Council. The group agreed to consider the application in more detail in October alongside a review of the Terms of Reference for the group when they would clarify whether they wished to include organisations in their membership.</p> <p>MH informed the group that there was to be a WBILN meeting at Calcot the following day and that all were invited.</p>

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	Action 5: MH to send details of future dates of WBILN meetings to EW for circulation to the Board.
9. Next meeting	<p>Meeting closed at 1:05pm.</p> <p>Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 25th October 2012</p> <p>Main Agenda Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on Adult Social Care personal budgets – Jan Evans Review of Terms of Reference for the Board Equality objectives – Elaine Walker <p>Agenda Item for January 2013 – Housing and Planning, in particular the number of houses that are accessible for people with disabilities.</p>
Meeting dates for 2012/13	<p>Dates agreed for future meetings:</p> <p>Thursday 25th October 2012 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.</p> <p>Thursday 31st January 2013 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.</p>