

**Minutes of the West Berkshire Council's  
Disability External Scrutiny Board  
Meeting 31 January 2013**

Item	Notes
<b>Board Members in attendance</b>	Jan Rothwell (Chair), Alan Fleming, Mick Hutchins, John Carr, Sue Hinks, Keith Hester, Kate Green
<b>Others</b>	Councillor Pamela Bale, Councillor Julian Swift-Hook, Councillor Gwen Mason, Elaine Walker (Principal Policy Officer), Jan Evans, Verity Murrricane (8 Bells)
<b>1. Introduction and apologies.</b>	<p>The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies: No apologies were received.</p>
<b>2. Minutes and Matters Arising.</b>	<p>The draft minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> October 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- JC confirmed that he had circulated a flyer for the WBILN via email.</li> <li>- MH confirmed that he had circulated the questions and responses from the Home Care User Group meetings held in May 2012.</li> </ul> <p>[Note: An additional question that was asked at the last meeting was whether forms of identification other than a passport or driving licence could be presented when applying for a Blue Badge. Officers advised that there had never been an incidence of someone applying who did not have suitable ID. However should it happen in the future, the Blue Badge Team can be contacted for advice.]</p>

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<p><b>3. Update on Changes to Social Care progress report and Personal Budgets</b></p>	<p>Jan Evans explained to the Board that over the last three years a transformation programme had been taking place in Adult Social Care. This had included a care management restructure, the reconfiguration of day services, a review of in-house care provision, and the introduction of personal budgets. Work was now moving on to an Adult Social Care Efficiency Programme which was set within the national financial picture of reducing investment from central Government.</p> <p>Jan Evans provided the following information alongside a presentation (attached):</p> <p>Access for All:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The advice service had diverted approximately 45% of callers away by resolving their query adequately;</li> </ul> <p>Maximising Independence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based at Hillcroft;</li> <li>• An assessment can be made within 4 hours following an NHS professional identifying a crisis situation where the provision of care support services could result in the avoidance of an admission to hospital.</li> <li>• There is a high throughput in the system, and once through the re-ablement system, an individual will be assessed and given a personal budget if they require ongoing support.</li> </ul> <p>Long Term Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Disability and Dementia teams have been formed in recognition of the specialist requirements needed;</li> </ul> <p>MH requested more detail about the Physical Disability team. Jan Evans replied that it consists of about 5 Occupational Therapists, about 7 Social Workers, and a number of personal budget support workers who review and help individuals to manage their budgets. Support Workers undertake various mandatory training courses and are qualified to an NVQ equivalent level.</p> <p>MH asked whether the assessment process would be outsourced. Jan Evans responded that this seemed unlikely as assessing need and allocating appropriate budgets from Council resources was a statutory function of the</p>

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	<p>Council.</p> <p>MH asked how much resource was allocated for advocacy work. Jan Evans responded that some advocacy was undertaken through Age UK, mostly in relation to money management. This was currently open to people over the age of 55, although there was recognition that younger people would be impacted by the Welfare Benefit changes and this will need to be managed.</p> <p>MH asked how much the discretionary housing grant is. Jan Evans agreed to circulate this figure.</p> <p><b>Action 1:</b> Jan Evans to inform the board how much discretionary housing grant is, and to circulate information about how to access grants.</p> <p>MH commented that the bedroom tax did not account for carers where they were family members.</p> <p>Verity Murrucane suggested circulating the information that had been put together by Sovereign Housing. The Board agreed.</p> <p><b>Action 2:</b> VM to provide EW with information from Sovereign Housing about the upcoming changes to benefits for circulation.</p> <p>Jan Evans continued with the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1305 people were currently receiving a chargeable service, but this number changed constantly;</li> <li>• Flexible carer support was provided in order to meet individual needs and to assist in maintaining carer duties;</li> <li>• There are 16 projects planned for the future. Jan Evans agreed to circulate information relating to these projects.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action 3:</b> Jan Evans to provide information on the 16 future projects being undertaken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a recognition of parents' concerns when their children reach the age of 18 and children's services stop. The transition from child to adult is being looked at to consider how to streamline the pathway.</li> </ul>

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	<p><b>Personal Budgets</b></p> <p>Jan Evans considered that approximately 20 to 30 people were being supported by Kingsley Brokerage service with Direct Payments.</p> <p>MH suggested that there was a cost saving to the Council by transferring people onto personal budgets, as opposed to providing support services. Jan Evans replied that there was still a support function to be undertaken by the Council to support people in managing their personal budgets. However it was noted that there were still issues to be overcome with personal budgets, for example, people who choose a block package or residency packages, will have less choice about how to spend their personal budget as the service provider will be linked to the package.</p> <p>VM asked what was the breakdown of people with mental health issues or learning disabilities as a proportion of total users of personal budgets. Jan Evans agreed to circulate this information.</p> <p><b>Action 4:</b> Jan Evans to circulate a breakdown of the proportion of personal budget holders with mental health issues or learning disabilities.</p> <p>Jan Evans commented that when personal budgets began, the Council wasn't fully prepared and the Council was now auditing its practices to improve the way it manages personal budgets. This includes reclaiming unused money where it had been over allocated or underused (without jeopardising individual support plans). Currently the Council is looking at how Wiltshire operate their personal budgets as it is a simpler process.</p> <p>KG asked who would develop the Easy Read documents. Jan Evans replied that Webcas would do this.</p> <p>Councillor Mason asked for more information on Provider Forums. Jan Evans replied that Tandra Forster meets regularly with providers to discuss issues and share information.</p> <p>MH raised continuing healthcare packages and commented that he was concerned that the NHS were not taking enough responsibility for people once they were out of hospital and back in the community. He commented that the Council were paying for continuing healthcare and the NHS were benefitting from that. He asked whether there was scope to join up the health and social care packages. Jan Evans replied that this situation was recognised and was a matter for ongoing debate.</p> <p>Jan Evans provided information to show that Berkshire West PCT funded continuing healthcare in the community for</p>

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	<p>the lowest number of individuals in the country , although there were people in the community requiring this funding. An independent review has been undertaken and the recommendations from that are being taken forward with a view to improving this situation.</p> <p>MH raised a concern that people had been told that carers would no longer be funded to take others shopping. He felt that this should not proceed until consultation had taken place. Jan Evans agreed, and stated that no progress would take place until consultation had been undertaken.</p> <p>MH raised another concern that local disability organisations are concerned at the possible ‘policy creep’ around the older people’s placement policy which enables older people to be placed out of area. The concern is for the future application of the policy by managers who may interpret the policy more freely and take more advantage of the ability to place out further of area. Jan Evans responded that the policy had been passed by the Executive and had been developed in recognition that there were not many places in West Berkshire and that placing people outside West Berkshire would often result in people staying closer to their family than crossing the district.</p>
<p><b>4. Mental Health – Service User experiences</b></p>	<p>Verity Murrigane provided an update on 8 Bells, advising that she had stood down as Chair in July 2012, and since then 8 Bells had not done well. She felt that this highlighted issues around support for non-statutory services and low level preventative support. Without long term funding 8 Bells was not able to operate efficiently. It was not possible to offer employment as only very short contracts could be considered.</p> <p>In addition there was much confusion regarding the differences between similar support organisations such as 8 Bells and Pulling Together. The more structured approach of Pulling Together required a higher level of funding than the £15k required by 8 Bells just to keep running.</p> <p>VM noted that if these support services were not able to continue, then the Council would miss the feedback that could be given by users of these services.</p> <p>One problem was that bidding for grants was difficult as competition was high and other organisations had dedicated people who knew how to create a compelling bid which small organisations were not able to do.</p> <p>Councillor Bale suggested approaching the Greenham Common Trust and Empowering West Berkshire (EWB) as this was the kind of advice that they were able to provide. VM replied that 8 Bells had approached these organisations but had received no help.</p>

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	<p>VM suggested a regular meeting between similar organisations to discuss issues and flag areas of concern and that communications needed to be improved. Councillor Bale suggested that EWB should form part of the communications.</p>
<p><b>5. Housing and Planning</b></p>	<p>Concern was shown for the changes to Welfare Benefits and the application of the bedroom assessment in particular. It was not clear how the assessment might affect disabled people and their carers. MH asked what scope there is for a local policy to be developed within the confines of national guidance to be clear how West Berkshire would manage this issue.</p> <p><b>Action 5:</b> EW to find out whether a local policy could be developed.</p> <p>AF believed that there was simply not enough accommodation available for disabled people and a building programme should be established although the development of suitable housing was discouraged by the need to maintain a certain density of housing. Councillor Bale advised that density was no longer an issue, but that developers found larger houses more profitable.</p> <p>The Housing Allocations Policy was due for a further consultation on the draft document.</p> <p><b>Action 6:</b> EW to circulate when the consultation would take place.</p>
<p><b>6. Review of Terms of Reference for the Board</b></p>	<p>JR reminded the Board that a decision had been reached that membership of the board was open to disabled people and carers, and not to organisations; and that current board members were to consider how to increase membership when that is desired.</p> <p>With regard to enquiries from people who would like to be part of the board but are unable to attend, this is to be dealt with as the issue arises. But may involve circulating papers well in advance of the meeting to allow comment to be made.</p> <p>The proposed amended terms of reference were agreed by the board.</p>
<p><b>7. AOB</b></p>	<p>Transport Forum – At the last meeting Cheryl Evans gave a presentation on road safety which was excellent. There remain reservations about the real time passenger system for buses but this is a matter for the Forum to resolve.</p> <p>Home Care User Group – This has amalgamated with the personal budget group and conversations are taking place</p>

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	<p>to consider how best to reach people.</p> <p>Access Panel: The last two meetings have been cancelled due to a reduction in the number of relevant applications coming through. JC is commenting on those that do appear. A meeting is taking place on the 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss how the Access Panel will move forward.</p> <p>AOB:</p> <p>The board would like to send their condolences to Norma Weaver on the recent loss of her husband.</p> <p>JC suggested that the Council should maintain a database for 'near misses' to allow members of the public to report potential issues.</p>
<p><b>8. Next meeting</b></p>	<p>The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 25 April 2013 in Committee Room 1.</p> <p>Main Agenda Items:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Welfare Benefits</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Discretionary Housing Grant</p>
<p><b>Meeting dates for 2013/14</b></p>	<p>Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2013 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10:30 am – 1:00 pm</p> <p>Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10:30 am – 1:00 pm</p> <p>Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2014 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10:30 am – 1:00 pm</p>