

Audit Committee Update – Supporting People Programme Grant

18th December 2015

Introduction

In the last Audit Committee meeting on 30th September 2015 a brief update report was presented to show the progress that had been made by the Supporting People Team on the two key issues raised by the Internal Audit of the Supporting People Programme Grant for 13/14.

This update seeks to evidence the work that has been done to remedy this since the last Audit Committee meeting and seeks to re-assure members that the work is progressing in a planned and timely way.

Progress to date

Progress is being made by the Supporting People Team on all the 4 elements that were agreed in the Status Report. However, this needs to be seen in the context of the wider Supporting People Programme Grant (SPPG) issues faced by the Welsh Government and Carmarthenshire County Council.

The British Government's Comprehensive Spend Review has delayed the Welsh Government's budget announcement which is having a knock-on effect on the announcement of the SPPG award for 2016/17. It is not anticipated that indicative figures will be available until January 2016 with the actual SPPG award not being announced until February 2016. There is an expectation that there will be a considerable cut in the SPPG though the Welsh Government has not indicated to local authorities how much of a cut this is likely to be. Conversations with Supporting People colleagues across Wales have resulted in estimations of between 5% and 20% cuts in 2016/17. The Supporting People Team has had to prepare models of how different levels of cuts will affect Carmarthenshire's Supporting People landscape. This, through the Supporting People Planning Group, has shifted some of the focus of the work of the Team though the commitment to fulfilling the obligations that we have to raise the standards in line with expectations remains.

The following is a brief summary of the actions completed to date:

1. Floating Support projects – Interim Contracts have been issued to existing service providers of floating support. Work on the tender has been ongoing with 2 market engagement events being undertaken. A number of service providers, both existing and new, have attended these events. It is anticipated that the tender will be launched during the 1st week January 2016 with new services, and therefore new contractual arrangements, coming into place in April 2016.
2. Jointly funded supported living projects – Service profiles are being drawn up for these services.
3. Older people alarm services – Work is ongoing in this area, though it is to be acknowledged that this has not proceeded as quickly as anticipated. A paper is to be prepared for the Supporting People Planning Group and/or DMT considering the future commissioning arrangements for the service.

4. Remaining services - The Chair of the Supporting People Planning Group, the Director of Community Services, has asked for a desktop evaluation to be undertaken with the Authority's strategic lead for each service area to prioritise the services that are strategically relevant. This is being done so that, at the end of the process, what will remain will be the services that are needed in the county rather than continuing to fund services that do not meet the strategic aims of Carmarthenshire County Council. A tool has been developed with Hywel Dda University Health Board to undertake this piece of work. This exercise is to be completed by end January 2016 to inform commissioning decisions.

A programme of contract review meetings has been undertaken since the last Audit Committee meeting in September 2015 with 23 providers having been met with and services discussed. There have also been 12 monitoring visits arranged to test eligibility and outcomes achieved. Some issues were highlighted and have been followed up with the service providers. These issues were mostly around the accuracy of outcomes recording.

Service evaluation for those who have suffered domestic abuse and support for those who have offended have been completed. The intelligence gained about these services will be used to inform the exercise discussed in number 4 above.

In terms of moving forward, discussions are underway with colleagues in Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion to join the Supporting People Unified Referral System (SPURS) gateway for accessing services. SPURS is an electronic referral management system which matches applicants for services with relevant services that are the best fit for their support needs. This will help with ensuring that only people who have housing related support needs are referred into services. This will start the testing of eligibility for services as only applicants who have housing related support needs will be referred to services.

Since the last Audit Committee, there have been some changes in the composition of the Supporting People Team. The person responsible for the financial administration of the SPPG has left the Team. It is anticipated that the responsibility for this will pass to the Department for Communities' Business Support function sitting under the Senior Business Support Manager. This will enable payments to be made centrally and will enable capacity to be released for financial monitoring of service providers. This will give the Supporting People Team better information with regards to monitoring the SPPG in line with the Project Grants Manual. It is anticipated that this will be able to be transferred by April 2016. In the meantime, an interim solution is being developed.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this brief report shows the progress that the Supporting People Team has made since the last Audit Committee meeting and the commitment remains to improve the administration and management of the SPPG in line with the standards expected by Carmarthenshire County Council.