

Feedback to the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board
from the Adult Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel meetings on 13
October and 5 December 2023

Adult Social Care Placements

The main budget pressures on Adult Social Care continues to be care package costs and inflationary pressures. The Panel has been provided with additional information on adult placements and the proportionate split for the 2023/24 budget across different service areas for older people (£90m), learning disabilities (£79m), physical disabilities (£22m) and mental health (£28m).

In December, we learned that at Period 6 there was no change to the £8.9m gross forecast overspend on placements, partially mitigated by use of a one off £3.6m additional grant from central Government however caution was given that winter was approaching, which would increase costs.

The current budget was based on a 4% growth in clients, but this point had already been reached by the end of July 2023. By the end of September there was a 5.5% growth, resulting in an additional 366 packages.

There was also pressure across the market, for example a 30% mark up on agency staffing costs.

Statutory services have to be delivered, however, it is vital that the Council is not overpaying and all staff have been reminded to check and challenge the market. Home of Choice continues to be important for residents, with families having the option to top up what the Council can offer if an alternative provision is preferred.

The Council is mindful that some companies could withdraw services from Worcestershire due to market pressures, however the Council cannot always deliver all the uplifts asked for. There were cases when companies had challenged the Council, however an annual budget had been set and Council priorities were delivered.

The Panel has been assured that robust plans are in place if provision was withdrawn at short notice. Work is ongoing with Homes to look at future opportunities given the change in needs of clients entering care. Currently, the average stay in Care is around 2 years, a figure comparable nationally.

Learning Disabilities accounts for more than half the placement budget because of clients' complex needs and a further factor was increased costs amongst individuals coming through from Worcestershire Children First (WCF). It has been explained that whilst WCF looks after young people until the age of 25 as part of the recently agreed all-age disability Strategy, costs for each individual switch to Adult Services from the age of 18. The Strategic Director for People believes there is more work to be done in getting involved at an earlier stage to plan different life paths.

The Panel has asked about increased admissions to permanent care for those aged 18-64, of whom the majority would be adults with learning disabilities. In discussions with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility and Senior Officers, it has been stressed to the

Panel that wherever possible the Council looks to provide alternatives to residential care, for example supported living. Best value principles are also always applied to placements.

The Panel has been advised that factors for entering long term placements include the fact that the wariness of entering these settings during the pandemic, is now dissipating, and for older people, increased severity of people's health is also a factor, as people are living for longer.

The fact has been raised that residential care is often the default route and it is very difficult for the Council to turn around these decisions without prior involvement, although there is good information on the Council's website about options to stay independent and living at home. It is understood that dialogue is being pursued within the integrated care system to highlight to health organisations the impact of decisions for individuals on adult social care budgets.

At the Panel's request, the regular performance dashboard it receives now includes detail about the primary reasons for admission to residential and nursing care, the highest number being for personal care.