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Summary of an Inquiry Report of the:  
**Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee**

# **‘Closer to Home’ Project: Out of County Placements for Adults with a Learning Disability**

**Feb 2021**



**Cardiff Council**

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## FOREWORD

At a meeting of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee held on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018, Members agreed to undertake an Inquiry on the decision-making process for supported living arrangements for adults with a learning disability; which focused on the current pathways in place for transitioning identified individuals back into county. The work presented within this Inquiry highlights that the demographic pressures, fiscal constraints and upcoming changes in legislation, present an even greater need to ensure there is continued collaborative working, both within Council departments and all involved stakeholders. Further to this, it also highlights the need to ensure information is relayed in a clear, proactive manner and that formal, specific pathways for those identified as returning to the locality are progressed in order to provide guidance and avoid disputes.

In a bid to ensure this inquiry produced robust, in-depth evidence the inquiry was supplemented by desktop research along with engagement with a vast range of service users and providers either in person or through the inquiry's 'Call for Evidence'. In addition, task group members also commissioned independent research to identify the information and support requirements of the service users and families of those who are due to, or have undergone, transition from an out of county provider. The primary research was supported by the service area who, along with providing relevant contextual information, and with consent from the individuals, also provided scrutiny research with the names and contact details of those who wanted to be involved in the research process. The respondents included advocate organisations and parents of those currently in out of county settings, those whose children were currently transitioning and those whose children had completed transition. The research relied on qualitative methodologies through the use of both interviews and focus groups. It is important to note that in line with the inquiry's terms of reference and one of the key principles of scrutiny; this inquiry has placed the voices of the key stakeholders who engaged in this work at the heart of its recommendations. However, it remains mindful to the legislation, policies and challenges in which services must operate.

From the evidence presented in this report it is clear that work within this field is continually progressing and is led by a clear drive within the service area to ensure Cardiff provides an

excellent service for adults with a learning disability. It is hoped that this report will support the service area in overcoming both current and future challenges; supplementing the service area's drive for continuous improvement.

Finally, it is important to note that this Inquiry was originally intended to be formally submitted to the Council's Cabinet during April 2020, however, the subsequent onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and related UK-wide lockdown meant that formal submission of this report was delayed.



**Councillor Shaun Jenkins**  
**Chairman, Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee**

Throughout this Inquiry it became clear that supporting individuals with a learning disability, in a way which allows them to continuously thrive and develop, was a shared objective by all stakeholders who engaged with this Inquiry. It was strikingly evident that all stakeholders are continually seeking to ensure that any individual with a learning disability will fundamentally achieve long-term, sustainable, outcomes that enable them to become active participants in, and contributors to, society. In line with this objective, and the principals of the Joint Commissioning Strategy for Adults with Learning Disabilities 2019-2024 and upcoming Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) legislation, this Inquiry also seeks to place individuals with a learning disabilities and their carers at the heart of its work.

Members of this Inquiry have worked hard to present a number of recommendations for the council's Cabinet to consider which include, but are not limited to: measures to help ensure clear transparent communication at every stage of the process; procedures to help identify gaps in service provision; processes which help monitor the quality of skills and knowledge of an individual post transition, assurance methods that ensure the avoidance of regression in skills and that quality of life is maximised. All recommendations proposed in this Inquiry have been based on the evidence received and valued perspectives of the professionals, carers and advocates who engaged in this Inquiry. They are being presented to Cabinet in a bid to

supplement the service area's ethos of meeting individual needs through personalised care and support.

The Inquiry benefited from the active involvement of a number of Members from this Committee (both past and present), and the helpful contribution and significant insight from of a range of individuals, including the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health and Well-being, the former Director of Social Services, senior officers and frontline social workers within Adult Services, local and out of county providers, parents and advocates. I wish to pass on my sincere thanks to all stakeholders for their hospitality, openness and highly valued input. My thanks also to those organisations who took the time to respond to the Call for Evidence issued as part of this Inquiry. I also wish to pass on my thanks to Members involved in this inquiry for their continued time and dedication towards this Inquiry's work. Finally, I wish to thank the Scrutiny Officers involved in this Inquiry for their dedicated hard work and for helping to produce what I consider to be an excellent Report.



**Councillor Mary McGarry**  
**Task Group Chair, Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee**

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

The task group reviewed a draft scope for the Inquiry at its first meeting and agreed for the terms of reference to be:

- To review current pathways (with a particular focus on the decision-making process) in relation to supported living arrangements for adults with a learning disability;
- To review residential College placements and how decisions are made in terms of continuation;
- To identify best practice in relation to transitioning individuals from an out-of-county placement back into Cardiff;
- To engage with service users and their families in relation to the above whilst also understanding their level of involvement– placing them at the centre of any recommendations going forward;
- To identify current funding arrangements, consider whether this is being used effectively and make recommendations accordingly;
- To identify and recommend a range of options and provision (based on best practice) that could be developed and implemented in Cardiff.

## APPROACH TAKEN

This inquiry used evidence to make key findings and recommendations to the Council's Cabinet in respect of the current arrangements for transitioning identified individuals with learning disabilities who reside out of county.

During the course of the inquiry Task Group Members agreed to hold a number of meetings to receive the following information:

- Overview and background – to set the context for the Inquiry and gain an understanding of the current projects, plans, proposals and assessment process around out of county placement for adults with a learning disability.
- The legislative context in which services must operate.
- Members received evidence from the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health and Well-being, senior officers within the Social Services directorate and external witnesses from both out of county and local providers during their visits including: Bridgend College, Coleg Elidyr, Glasallt Fawr, Values in Care, Vision 21, Dimensions Cymru, Innovate Trust and Mirus.
- In order to ensure the inquiry received far reaching evidence, a Call for Evidence was also requested to both local and out of county providers in order to further understand both the Council and provider's role within a transition process.
- During the course of this Inquiry, the task group commissioned primary research with both parents and advocates in order to establish the information and support requirements of service users and their families within a transition process. The research relied on qualitative research methodologies such as one to one interviews and focus groups. In total 12 young adults with disabilities were represented within the work. Parents of a further two individuals who had transitioned from out of county residential settings were invited to participate however for different reasons the scheduled interviews could not be undertaken.
- The primary research conducted for this inquiry resulted in a separate report entitled, '*Parents Information and Support Needs on the "Closer to Home" Project for Young Adults with Learning Disabilities*' and is available upon request.
- The Inquiry also benefited from extensive desktop research, which included consideration of the documents listed in the following bibliography.

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## KEY FINDINGS

The below Key Findings arrived after twelve meetings which included four full day visits to both local and out of country service providers with a variety of expert witnesses. The Inquiry was also informed by extensive desk based and primary research and an array of background documents. Details of all evidence considered by the task group and used in the preparation of this report are contained within a record of evidence that is available upon request.

Following a review of the evidence, Task Group Members identified the following Key Findings:

### Context

Population estimates for Cardiff show that the numbers of individuals with a learning disability in Cardiff will continue to grow. With people living longer and therefore requiring support for longer, this will place a significant pressure and demand on Cardiff's local services.

#### **KF1**

Data shows that Cardiff Council has a greater number of children and young adults with complex learning disabilities compared to any other Welsh local authority. This is primarily due to its city status and availability of local services such as the Children's Hospital for Wales. Such factors will inevitably result in additional pressures on required accommodation provision; increasing the need for specialist provision for cases with complex health and social needs and/or behaviours, which require a high level of multi-agency support.

#### **KF2**

It is recognised by the service area that additional accommodation for individuals' with the most complex needs is required locally.

#### **KF3**

The Wales Audit Office publication, *Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with a Learning Disability*, published in 2018, states that local authorities require better quality financial, population and demographic projections to gauge future demand to ensure

they make the most informed decisions. It is for this reason, the service area have confirmed the creation of a Business Analyst post.

#### **KF4**

Following the Children Act 1989, there was a move to create a specialist specific team for children with disabilities. However, in a bid to ensure cross cutting shared concepts, the service area is set to return to its original model and become an 'All Age Learning Disability Service' whereby staff across all areas of Learning Disabilities (*Children and Adults*) will merge. It is anticipated this should encourage better collaboration within the transitioning process, whilst stimulating the service area's culture for continuous improvement whilst remaining open and responsive.

#### **KF5**

#### Strategies and Legislation

The Joint Commissioning Strategy for Adults with a Learning Disability (2019-2024) sets out how Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Councils and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board will work together to respond to the needs and aspirations of the adult learning disability population within the context of national legislation and guidance, wider local plans and available resources. At a local level, the strategy will inform what services each of the three organisations will individually or jointly commission to meet personal outcomes, encourage participation and promote independence over the next five years.

#### **KF6**

Key priorities of the Cardiff and Vale Joint Commissioning Strategy relevant to this inquiry are:

- Information; accessible and easy to understand;
- Choice and control – listening to the person and carer's views;
- Right care at the right time – early crisis and respite support;
- Day opportunities – volunteering and work experience;
- Transitioning should be joined up and planned well.

#### **KF7**

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (*hereafter referred to as 'The ALN Act'*) makes provision for a new statutory framework for supporting children and young people with additional learning needs. It replaces the existing legislation surrounding special educational needs (SEN) and the current assessment of children and young people with learning disabilities in post-16 education and training. The Act instead places the responsibility of learners with additional learning needs from the age of 0-25 with local authorities.

#### **KF8**

During the course of the inquiry, Members received a briefing from the Additional Learning Needs Transformation Lead for Central South Consortium and Cardiff Council's Senior Achievement Leader Inclusion and were advised that confusion can arise from the interpretation that the ALN Act provides a right for a child with additional learning needs to stay in education up until the age of 25. It was confirmed that the principles of the ALN Act stem around parity and are laid out to ensure that a child with Additional Learning Needs has equal rights in accessing further education courses as a child without Additional Needs, and can therefore access and receive a training course up until the age of 25.

#### **KF9**

Due to the consensus set by Welsh Government policy publications and guidance, the further education option for those with additional learning needs is seen by governing bodies to be one which offers the 'college experience' equating to two years of education, not the 'university experience' which would be three years of education.

#### **KF10**

A key element of the ALN Act is its endeavour to increase participation of the individual with learning disabilities, stating that it is imperative individuals see the planning process as something which is done with them as opposed to for them. As such, they and their families should actively be encouraged to participate in the planning process for their educational opportunities through the provision of clear, impartial advice, information and advocacy.

#### **KF11**

Primary research conducted for this inquiry has shown that the parents of people with a learning disability involved in this inquiry currently have limited or no knowledge of the ALN Act and the changes it will bring.

#### **KF12**

The ALN Act places greater emphasis on disagreement avoidance and dispute resolution. Due to schools maintaining Individual Development Plan's (IDP), the ALN Act will introduce different appeal procedures. Should a young person or parent (*or any other stakeholder*) wish to challenge an individual's IDP or the learning provision they have been provided with, there will be clear routes for them to do so and local authorities must provide access to independent advocacy services for this route.

#### **KF13**

Under the ALN Act, the assessment process for determining further education will focus on educational need; looking at the realistic prospect of an individual completing a course and achieving educational goals.

#### **KF14**

The challenge under the ALN Act will likely be around capacity and demand, and although responsibility for further education provision will begin at school, the ALN Act places emphasis on relevant bodies, such as adult services becoming involved to ensure every child and young person with a learning disability known to services is aware of all of the options available to them.

#### **KF15**

During the course of the inquiry, Members heard first-hand the concerns from some of the specialist further education providers on what the proposed arrangements under the ALN Act may bring. The concerns raised to Members included:

- There is a lack of recognition in the Draft ALN Code of specialist provision as part of the post-16 further education offer;
- A possible lack of provision for independent advice and guidance for parents and young people with both complex and low incidence additional learning needs;

- Possible risk of young people with complex needs being denied Additional Learning Provision by the nature of their ALN.

Further concerns raised were that local authorities:

- Could be compromised by their role as assessors, commissioners and funders;
- May only provide access to information about local post-16 options other than specialist further education provisions (*which are all currently out of county*);
- May end an IDP rather than consider a placement at a specialist further education provision.

#### **KF16**

The 'Multi-Agency Protocol for Children and Young People with Additional Learning Needs' (*currently in draft form*) is being developed in line with the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018), the principles of the Social Services and Well-Being Act (2014) and the application of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) amongst other key legislation and guidance. The protocol has been coproduced with stakeholders from Education, Health Services, Social Services, schools, further education institutions and the third sector through attendance at meetings, workshops and engagement events throughout 2018-19. The protocol also links into to the Joint Commissioning Strategy for Adults with Learning Disabilities (2019-2024) as a work stream from the strategy will develop an action plan specific for those with learning disabilities within the transition period.

#### **KF17**

**Funding** (*under current arrangements for specialist further education provision*)

Currently, there are around 300 specialist post-16 placements funded across Wales by the Welsh Government at any one time. The average combined cost for these placements is currently around £21m per annum – with around 50% of cost coming from the Welsh Government, 42% social care (local authorities) and around 5% health funding.

#### **KF18**

The proposal under the ALN Act is for funding for all placements to come from local authorities; however the Welsh Government is yet to work out how this will be done in practice. At the time of writing this report, there is no known formula for how funding will be

determined and for this reason there are significant concerns within this authority with regard to discrepancies between Welsh local authorities. For instance there is concern that those authorities which display higher trends could be seen as having equal costs to local authorities with much lower trends and expenditure. **KF19**

It was agreed by the majority of stakeholders who engaged in this inquiry that in order to effect positive change, the decision on the duration of an individual's placement in further education should consider the individual's specific characteristics including their scope and abilities (rate of learning) for developing the skills that they hope to achieve. It is widely suggested by both providers and parents that governing bodies must sufficiently recognise that individuals with a learning disability will take time to settle into a course and that the first year of a course tends to act as an induction period, the second year is developing new skills and the third year provides opportunity for such skills to be consolidated.

#### **KF20**

The reduction in Welsh Government funding for further education provision from three years to two, has also had a knock-on effect for local authorities', as more 'move on' accommodation is now needing to be sourced.

#### **KF21**

During the inquiry Members heard from providers that frustration for both themselves and parents tends to arise where there is uncertainty or questions surrounding funding. Primary research commissioned by this inquiry found a strong desire amongst parents to better understand the funding process.

#### **KF22**

### Finance

During this inquiry, an independent consultancy confirmed that Cardiff is a comparatively low spending authority in Wales on support for adults with learning disabilities whilst still maintaining good levels of satisfaction with support. This finding suggests scope to increase the quality of local provision for those with complex needs and to consider increasing access to out of county provisions when required. **KF23**

Findings from an independent consultancy confirmed that currently there is a disconnect between local authority and health colleagues. It was reiterated that better communication with health colleagues would ensure more efficient working and possibly greater levels of funding. Which in turn will provide more effective services.

#### **KF24**

Members were advised that due to the current climate of austerity and cuts there are requirements for officers to remain within certain budgets. Members were further advised that the level of justifying and producing sufficient evidence in support of a more expensive placement is due to the budgetary position along with Key Performance Indicator requirements.

#### **KF25**

#### The Transitioning Pathway

There are currently four Transition Social Workers who facilitate an individual's movement from Children to Adult Services within the authority.

#### **KF26**

Primary research conducted with parents during this inquiry found that most parents have limited knowledge and understanding of the assessment process for accessing specialist further education provision including eligibility requirements, duration of funding and the roles of various stakeholders involved in the process.

#### **KF27**

The current transition planning process following secondary education is set out in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Government, 2004) and begins in Year 9 SEN annual review. During the inquiry Members heard that an individual with learning disabilities will typically transition from school to further education around the age of 19 and may transition again 2 – 3 years later. During the inquiry it was confirmed to Members that during this time an individual may remain with the same adult social worker or may be reallocated to another social worker depending on capacity.**KF28**

During this inquiry, both parents and out of county providers highlighted the need for consistency in the representation of social workers during the review process of further education placements.

### **KF29**

The primary research conducted by this inquiry highlights that under current arrangements, the majority of parents interviewed would request better understanding and guidance of the transition process involved in moving their child from specialist further education to the appropriate care and support arrangements in Cardiff. In particular, parents highlighted the need to improve engagement between themselves and the service area along with greater recognition that their input significantly assists the objective of meeting a child's 'best interest.'

### **KF30**

#### Benefits of Out of County Placements

During the inquiry the following benefits of out of county placements (*both within further education colleges and residential settings*), proposed by out of county providers included:

- Better social mobility;
- Wider relationships;
- Increased-self-understanding;
- Improved self-advocacy and self-reliance;
- Reduction of stress on families;
- Improved mental health outcomes;
- Families able to enter employment / increased employment opportunities;
- Improved health, well-being and quality of life and;
- Reduced elective and non-elective hospital admission.

### **KF31**

Specialist further education institutions visited during the inquiry had the benefit of many on-site facilities and services, including but not limited to:

- Speech and language;
- Counselling;
- Occupational therapy assessment.

#### **KF32**

The benefits and outcomes were strongly acknowledged amongst the parents (*of those with children in out of county specialist further education provision*) who engaged with this inquiry who in the majority noted their content with the;

- Individualised support programmes;
- Availability of specialist staff;
- Remarkable development in their child's skills, knowledge and independence.

#### **KF33**

The importance of environmental factors and their significant benefit on an individual's (*with certain needs*) physical and emotional well-being was widely recognised by all stakeholders who engaged in this inquiry.

#### **KF34**

Although for some young people with disabilities, a specialist further education college may not suit, the perspective presented to Members by specialist further education providers during this inquiry is that the opportunity offered by a specialist setting, for an individual to learn and live amongst peers with similar needs and life experiences can be a very effective way to help them achieve long-term sustainable outcomes that enable them to become active participants in, and contributors to society along with aiding their progression into adulthood.

#### **KF35**

The majority of parents who engaged in this inquiry believe that within a specialist further education provision there is a much stronger opportunity for their child to grow in maturity, develop independence and gain additional skills away from the home environment and that recognition of such skills and opportunity by professionals is paramount.

#### **KF36**

Transitioning from an of out of county provision

During this inquiry, Members were unable to obtain published information which confirmed and clearly laid out the transitioning pathway for adults with a learning disability who may undergo transitioning from an out of county provision. It became apparent that the service area lacked a published framework and guidelines on how identified individuals are brought back from out of county in a structured, personalised way. While a wealth of information was provided to the task group, there was no evidence that this had yet been consolidated into one robust 'pathway' used as a blueprint for returning identified adults into their local county.

**KF37**

If an individual transitions from an out of county residential provision there is a high multi-disciplinary team (MDT) involvement, including health colleagues, specialist behaviour team and so on. Further to this, a wealth of risk assessments along with a full assessment and analysis of care package is also undertaken. This is conducted in full consultation with the family and individual (as appropriate). It is to note that although full and thorough risk assessments and analysis of care package is provided for all individuals, MDT involvement does not commonly occur for those transitioning out of residential college.

**KF38**

The key drivers in determining an individual's provision were confirmed to Members as:

- The individual's wishes
- Families wishes
- Persons needs
- Budgetary position.

Each driver was confirmed as equal in weighting.

**KF39**

Based on the views of the parents who engaged in this inquiry, the guidance and scheduling involved in transitioning individuals out of specialist further education provision appeared to be considerably inconsistent. **KF40**

Members heard from Council officers that for those placed in a specialist further education provision, the year before their course is due to end a reassessment phase will begin; this inquiry's research found that the transition period tended to be initiated (*with the parents*) around 6 months prior to course end. Parents perceived this as too late in the process with parent suggestions that discussion regarding transitioning for those currently placed in out of county further education provision should start at the end of first year (*for two year funding*) or at the end of second year (*for three year funding*).

#### **KF41**

During the inquiry it was confirmed to task group Members that a wealth of work goes into identifying properties for an individual – noting that compatibility with current residents, the environment, the needs of the individual and that staff members have the right skills is central to the decision making process. Members found that the significance of these factors was recognised amongst all stakeholders involved in this inquiry.

#### **KF42**

Although it was reiterated to Members that all provisions are equally acknowledged, valued and utilised, Members hold concerns that under current practice it appears that provisions perceived as 'intentional communities' and their benefit as a provision is not widely recognised. Members wish to reiterate the importance of seeing the value in every provision as stated in the Welsh Government's *Prosperity for All* document.

#### **KF43**

Through engagement with both parents and providers, this inquiry found that during the transition process following further education provision, incompatible options are suggested and it appears that a process is followed even when known and advised by stakeholders that the suggested placements won't work.

#### **KF44**

During their review of 20 cases' written records, the independent consultants found that information kept in an individual's case file lacked definition on how the decision-making process within a transition (either from a residential college or from the family home) was

undertaken. To elaborate, it lacked detail on the contributing factors and how evidence was weighed. The review also showed that outcomes captured within the data appeared to be too generalised making it difficult to hold providers to account and effectively monitor an individual's progress when a transition has occurred.

**KF45**

An out of county provider who engaged in the inquiry, provided the group with an example of one resident who transitioned home after extended funding had not been agreed. The provider was then contacted by social services three weeks later inquiring if provision for this individual was still available as it had been determined that there were no suitable provisions available locally.

**KF46**

During a transition process, a Support Planner works with individuals to listen to their aspirations & needs with regards to meaningful occupations. The Support Planner has expertise in knowing what opportunities are available locally and becomes involved with an individual following a referral from a social worker should an individual wish to do activities in the community, instead of college, or after college, or while also attending college. Support Planners are involved with over 80 providers and services in Cardiff with a wide range of volunteering, social, sport, arts, health and adult education (life-long learning) opportunities. Since introducing Support Planners, the service area confirmed they have been able to offer a much wider range of occupation options, increasing an individual's skills, confidence and social networks.

**KF47**

Primary research conducted with parents during this inquiry found variability in their understanding of the overall transitioning process. It became evident they require clarity on the roles of stakeholders involved in the process, including their own role, along with an indicative timeline and greater detail of the specific stages involved.

**KF48**

During the inquiry Members were informed by officers that when required, future placement options are continuously discussed with the individual and the family. Findings by the

consultants further confirmed that, in the twenty cases they reviewed, good evidence was displayed demonstrating that young people and their parents/carers are actively involved in the process. However, primary research commissioned by this inquiry found that, out of six parents involved in the research whose children had gone through the transitioning process, two confirmed a positive experience. The other parents cited improvements could be made in engaging with them.

#### **KF49**

##### Lifelong Learning

The importance of a lifelong learning framework which allows for exceptional development of an individual, encouraging growth in confidence, developing an individual's independence and having an all-round positive impact on an individual's life was shared by all stakeholders who engaged in this inquiry.

#### **KF50**

##### Perception of Local Provisions

Although all local providers who engaged in this inquiry reiterated that the retention and development of an individual's skill set are at the forefront of their organisation, this inquiry's primary research found that out of the parents whose child had transitioned, most were unsure whether their child has sufficient opportunities in their current provision to undertake the activities and tasks that would help to maintain the knowledge and skills that they acquired during their college placement.

#### **KF51**

Croen et al (2015) identified that people with autism are at increased risk of physical health issues including diabetes, gastrointestinal disorders, high cholesterol, hypertension and obesity. Relationships with food can also be complex due to sensory needs, obsessive behaviour, anxiety or isolation. Such concerns were reiterated by some of the parents involved in this inquiry, who voiced their concerns that they were unsure if their child, who now resided in local provision, is encouraged to undertake sufficient physical activity and make healthy food choices. **KF52**

The findings of the primary research, commissioned by this inquiry show that parents of those currently residing in local provisions are unsure whether activities for their child are carried out as planned.

### **KF53**

#### The Capturing of Data

During the inquiry Members were informed that typically, incorrect assessments occur due to the variance of environments where an assessment is undertaken.

### **KF54**

Conwy Council's 'Progression Project' is designed to assist the assessment process through the development of a more informed understanding of accommodation and support needs. The Project consists of a refurbished bungalow which provides individuals with a 'come and try it' service for independent living. With individuals residing for the day, overnight or staying for a few days in order to ensure their needs are best determined.

### **KF55**

As a result of the Call for Evidence Members initiated with both local and out of county providers, it was confirmed that when an individual's placement is confirmed they, as the provider, will receive a Care Plan and/or a Unified Assessment which outlines the individual's abilities, capacity and needs, providing a brief overview of an individual's communication abilities, mobility, physical and emotional needs, special equipment, adaptations, educational need, medical information and so on. It was also confirmed that if the individual is a college leaver, they (*as a local provider*) would also receive a written assessment from the educational facility and/or a psychology report. However, one local provider noted that they tend to only receive such introductory information on an individual post entry.

### **KF56**

In order to ensure the process of sharing information between providers is both efficient and effective, Cardiff Council's Learning Disability team are currently working with one out of county provider on developing an all-encompassing document to assist in this process. **KF57**

When meeting frontline staff, Members queried what data is kept on those who have transitioned from an out of county provision and if the impact on an individual who has transitioned is specifically measured in order to ensure progress is sustained. Members were advised that following a transition, social workers will undertake an 8 week review which is then repeated at 6 and 12 months; to note, additional reviews will also be conducted if required. Such work is called 'person centred planning reviews' or 'pathway plans'.

**KF58**

**Monitoring & Review**

This inquiry's Call for Evidence confirmed that local providers (*in line with the Care Plan developed by social workers*) will develop a Personal Plan with the individual, which includes lifelong learning and skill development opportunities. This Personal Plan is reviewed at least 3 monthly by provider staff. However, a majority of the parents who engaged with this inquiry whose child resided in local provisions were unaware of such reviews.

**KF59**

Dr Edwin Jones' report on Western Bay's Closer to Home project places significant emphasis on the success of the Positive Behaviour Support model and the use of a core multi-disciplinary team within the transition process. In addition, the report also highlights the importance of data, which is captured both pre and post move, being utilised in order to best understand and monitor the impact on an individual who has moved in order to ensure full quality of life is achieved.

**KF60**

In line with the Wales Audit Office Report recommendation (*Strategic Commissioning of Accommodation Services for Adults with a Learning Disability, 2018, R6*), there appears to be a lack of formal, systematic monitoring and evaluation process on individuals who have transitioned which is managed by the authority .

**KF61**

### Gaps in Local Provision

As stated in the National Commissioning Board's guidance document (*Commissioning Accommodation and Support for a Good Life for People with a Learning Disability, 2019*), provision of the right kind of housing can either help or hinder an individual's social integration. It can also be fundamental in achieving a number of the outcomes set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. It is therefore essential that when a decision is made concerning accommodation provision, the full spectrum in meeting that individual's needs is considered.

#### **KF62**

Primary research conducted for this inquiry highlighted parents' expectations on the need to expand the availability of locally based care and support provision in the Welsh language.

#### **KF63**

The Mansell Report (*Services for People with Learning Disabilities and Challenging Behaviour or Mental Health Needs, 2007*), described as 'definitive UK guidance on the development of services for people with challenging behaviour', recommends that local services, including educational, training and day services are developed and expanded for people with a learning disability. The report also recommends that specialist services be developed locally which can support good, mainstream practice and improve the quality of life for those served.

#### **KF64**

During the course of the inquiry it was confirmed to Members that the service area are currently planning to develop an accommodation strategy to assist with long term planning on local provisions and are also working toward developing clear transitional pathways to ensure individuals and their families acquire full understanding of the options available in line with their need.

#### **KF65**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Following a review of the evidence received during this Inquiry, and the Key Findings detailed above, Members agreed the following recommendations for Cabinet consideration:

### Context

**R1** Due to the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act introducing clear direction for the Individual Development Plans of the most severe and complex cases becoming the direct responsibility of local authorities, Social Services should look to produce guidance which will provide all involved professionals with clear definition and distinction between complex and lower level needs and the necessary requirements to best support and develop such needs. This work could be developed by the newly formulated Business Analyst post who, within their role, should also look to take into account the projected demand of adults with a learning disability across the locality. Within their responsibilities it must be a priority of the Business Analyst to ensure and verify that all options offered to an individual with complex needs, in particular local options, are fully effective in providing said individual with an environment and opportunities that will encourage, develop and maintain their skills. The remit of the Business Analyst post should also include monitoring the service areas transition to an 'An All Age Learning Disability Service', providing the appropriate individual with their continued findings in order to ensure consistent monitoring. **(KF1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 23, 25, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 43, 50, 62, 63, 64)**

**R2** The Business Analyst should also undertake a review of local lifelong learning provisions to ensure there is adequate local capacity to meet known demographical pressures. **(KF1, 2, 4, 50, 63)**

### Communication

**R3** Look to establish a formal communication strategy surrounding the transitional process which confirms communication goals, target audience and communication plan and channels. Such a strategy will help identify the key stakeholders and key information to be communicated within a transition process, along with identifying how and when information

should be communicated. This should ensure earlier communication and aid disagreement avoidance and dispute resolution. **(KF6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 22, 24, 27, 30, 37, 38, 40, 41, 48, 49, 52, 54, 59, 65)**

**R4** As part of the communication strategy, formally engage with service user representative groups on a set, regular basis to help shape, improve planning and inform decision making. Such engagement could also be encouraged and better stimulated more informally through the use of social media **(KF1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 13, 17)**

**R5** Additional work is required in ensuring that a young person with learning disabilities and their carers feel more actively involved in the care planning process. Officers must ensure that care plans, including provider reviews are continuously written in accessible, appropriate language in order to improve understanding. Individuals and their parents/other relatives with responsibility for them, should always be invited to attend Reviews and contribute to Care Plans (with strict adherence to data protection, the individual's capacity and regulations set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act). Clear protocols and guidance should be drawn up regarding the resolution of disagreements concerning Care Plans and Review outcomes. All disagreements should be resolved in a timely manner.

**(KF6, 7, 11, 49, 58)**

**R6** Develop and/or support an informal parents' network specific to those parents who have a child currently placed out of county (*including further education provision*) and those who have transitioned back. This network would play a vital role in the dissemination of information. Provide parents with emotional support from peers and also provide a formal avenue for the service area to gain feedback on issues relating to services and accommodation. In order to stimulate relations and ensure effectiveness, the Cabinet Member, Director of Adults, Housing and Communities; and local providers should look to engage with the network directly **(KF3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 22, 27, 42, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 65)**

**R7** Through the parents' network, facilitate a conference once a year for parents of those who are due to transition or have transitioned from out of county provision. This

conference would again aid in the dissemination of information and could also be utilised as an arena to provide parents with workshops such as crisis management, dealing with complex behaviour and so on. The Cabinet Member, Director of Adults, Housing and Communities and local providers should again look to engage in the conference, providing the parents with information on local provisions such as staff competencies, information and case studies on where alternative living provisions have improved and developed a young person's skills and outcomes. Such valuable assurance will significantly assist an individual and their support network both in preparation for and during a transitioning period.

**(KF6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 17, 22, 27, 30, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 65)**

#### Strategies and Legislation

**R8** Due to the proposal under the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act for the responsibility of determining education provision (*including funding*) to come from local authorities, the Social Services directorate should look to review the working arrangements between themselves and the Education directorate to ensure robust collaboration workings are in place. **(KF8, 11, 15, 16, 20)**

**R9** Ahead of the fundamental change in responsibility detailed in **R8**, and the current concerns surrounding how such funding will be subsidised by the Welsh Government, the local authority should continue to lobby the Welsh Government for an adequate funding formula citing the known demographical pressures. **(KF1, 2, 18, 19)**

**R10** In line with the upcoming Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act and the Welsh Government's Prosperity for All Strategy, all involved professionals must ensure all provisions are discussed during the initial assessment process with both the young person and relevant guardian for their transition into adulthood. Although it is recognised that Welsh Government regulations state local options must be considered first in the assessment process, it is paramount that the benefits of all provisions, including intentional communities must be recognised and

therefore shared with individuals during the process in order to avoid ideological bias. This will also ensure that in line with the concerns of providers captured within this inquiry, the offer of specialist further education is not diminished and will ensure that the benefits of all provisions are recognised whilst mitigating the risk of the Council potentially being perceived as compromised in its role as assessor, commissioner and funder. **(K6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 16, 17, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 43, 49, 50)**

**R11** Under the upcoming arrangements of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act, officers, when relevant, should give due consideration to the possibility of an individual's educational college course being extended to three years if determined that the individual has not met their educational outcome and would benefit from an additional year. **(KF20, 23, 25, 35, 44)**

**R12** There must be clear recognition that those who attend a specialist further education provision, in addition to receiving educational outcomes can also acquire additional skills such as social skills and increased autonomy; this must be more greatly portrayed by local authority staff. Such recognition could be reaffirmed within the possible handbook (R14). **(KF31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 43, 50)**

#### Finance

**R13** As part of the Joint Commissioning Strategy for Adults with a Learning Disability (2019-2024) look to ensure, and/or support, the establishment of a clear formal framework arrangement between the local authority and health board. Such a framework will provide clear roles and responsibilities for the bodies and potentially assist in the establishment of pooled budgets, avoidance of lengthy disputes and further strengthen collaborative working. **(KF6, 7, 24)**

The Transitioning Pathway

**R14** Look to develop a handbook which covers the full spectrum of a transition process which can then be utilised as a tool for disseminating information to those with learning disabilities and their family, setting clear guidelines and expectations and dispelling any confusion. It is essential that the handbook provides an individual with the full scope of the 'next steps' following secondary education and all available options. The handbook should also look to provide clarity on the assessment process for further education provision, including contributing factors, how decisions are made, the evidence which will be required during an assessment, a summary of the funding process, the timeline for which decisions are made and the appeal process which includes clear signposting to relevant regulators. The handbook should also provide a summary of relevant legislation and how it may directly impact on an individual along with information about benefits and entitlements the individual may be eligible for. The Handbook should also look to ensure clarity on average length of placement for an individual undertaking a further education course and also provide generic reasoning for potential discrepancies in course lengths. This handbook must be provided to each individual transitioning from children to adult services and must also be available in schools and any other relevant avenues deemed appropriate. Local providers should also consider contributing to the handbook to ensure their services are fully reflected. The Handbook should also be available electronically on Cardiff Council website and should also be available in alternative languages on request. **(KF5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 22, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 59, 60, 65)**

**R15** There must be a specific, separate pathway and subsequent published guidance for further education leavers. The service area must ensure that the pathway addresses the full range of an individual's requirements, including but not limited to, accommodation provision, employment, life-long learning provision, long term health, friendships and relationships (*remaining mindful to both current and future needs*). **(KF6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 27, 28, 30, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53)**

**R16** A rigid schedule for the decision-making process for transition between provisions should be formed which includes a set timetable of when all stakeholders must be informed of a decision outcome. Within all published guidance, and verbal discussions, all local authority officers must ensure clarity is provided to individuals and involved family members on the duration of placement length. If a placement is provided temporarily or it is known it will cease (*e.g. educational course*) clear guidelines on when a transitioning phase will begin must be provided to the individual and any relevant family members prior to a placement commencing. In order to ensure no undue stress for the individual with learning disabilities, subsequent provision must be confirmed prior to a placement ending. If provision is unable to be confirmed prior to a placement ending, where current providers are able to extend their provision for an agreed period of time, due consideration should be giving to facilitating such possibilities whilst permanent provision is sourced. This possibility should be considered early in the transition process. Greater structure around the decision making process will facilitate more enhanced communication between all involved stakeholders, avoiding potential disputes and ensuring more effective outcomes for all involved **(KF9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 23, 25, 37, 38, 40, 41, 44, 48, 49, 50)**

Transitioning from an of out of county provision

**R17** Being mindful to known demographic pressures, undertake a review in order to consider if four transition social workers who cover the full transition spectrum from Children to Adult services is enough to adequately provide individuals, who may also undergo a transition in accommodation provision, with the required consistency to ensure their needs are best met, minimising any potential disruption, distress, and maximising a smooth transition. **(KF1, 2, 5, 26, 28, 29, 40, 41, 49)**

**R18** Agreement amongst all stakeholders within a transition process must be a fundamental priority. This could be achieved by providing continued assurance that compatibility factors such as age group, sex, type of learning disability, complexity of support needs, personality etc. is considered throughout the transition process. Evidence gathered during this consideration should be shared with both the individual and relevant family member (*where appropriate and in line with the adherence set out in R5*). **(KF38, 42, 45, 49)**

- R19** Look to develop an assessment centre which allows for onsite assessment which will subsequently ensure no individual is transitioned from any out of county placement, including further education provision, without appropriate accommodation being sourced and confirmed. Such a facility will help to avoid potential regression in skills and/or place unnecessary strain and disruption on both the young person and any involved family members and act as a tool for contingency planning. **(KF25, 44, 46, 54, 55)**
- R20** It is felt by Members that the move to support young people with learning disabilities to progress into adult life within their home area, further emphasises the importance of early planning and need for greater multi-disciplinary team working around the young person which is vital if the individual wishes to progress into more independent living. Therefore, where possible (and required) multi-disciplinary approach must be applied to those leaving further education provision. **(KF35, 39, 60)**
- R21** Look to gather feedback surrounding transition between provisions in a more strategic way by implementing a structured feedback process with all relevant stakeholders including the young person and family members who have undergone a transition from an out of county provision. The framework should look to determine service user satisfaction, performance monitoring and identify possible areas for improvement within the process. **(KF58, 60, 61)**
- R22** Work with local providers to ensure all documentary evidence such as risk assessments, house reports, and an individual's activity timetable and food intake is shared with parents (where appropriate) in a more structured manner. Such a process would help encourage and stimulate parents' confidence that their child and their needs are being met and developed and provide parents with assurance that each aspect of their son or daughter's life such as diet choice is being overseen. **(KF51, 52, 53, 59, 60)**
- R23** Take an active role in encouraging providers to further develop their Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) approach through organisational strategies which focus on developing staff skills and enable PBS to become more widely embedded in routine

practice. Encourage and facilitate providers to more greatly distribute this information to all relevant stakeholders. **(KF51, 52, 53, 60)**

**R24** Encourage shared learning across providers. Such shared learning will not only provide an opportunity for individuals with learning disabilities to meet other peers, but also provide a valuable assurance of the quality of care on offer within local providers. **(KF51, 52, 53)**

#### The Capturing of Data

**R25** During the transition process, ensure the sharing of information between providers is facilitated as soon as new provision is confirmed and ensure this is continued as an ongoing process in preparation for the transition. Provide an active role in certifying that all relevant documents and information obtained on the individual during an out of county provision is transferred to the new provider prior to a placement commencing. Consider including this process of conveying information between providers within the Cardiff & Vale Multi-Agency Protocol for Children and Young People with Additional Learning Needs' (*currently in draft form*). The information which is transferred between providers, should be available (*where appropriate*) on request. **(KF17, 46, 56, 57, 60)**

#### Gaps in Local Provision

**R26** If not already in practice, encourage local providers to consider enlisting parents onto their Board of Trustees. Such engagement and collaboration would stimulate and encourage better relations and understanding between parents and local providers. **(KF51, 52, 53)**

**R27** As stated in the National Commissioning Board's guidance document, *Commissioning Accommodation and Support for a Good Life for People with a Learning Disability*, the service area requires clear focus when developing the provider market, ensuring that all provision developed adds social value and improves an individual's wellbeing. In line with the growing demographic pressures, the service area should look to locally

develop a specialist provision specifically catering for those with complex needs.

**(KF1, 2, 3, 4, 23, 25, 33, 34, 36, 50, 62, 64, 65)**

**R28** When developing local options, formal evaluation should be drawn upon to ensure that the cost-benefit of different models are accurately assessed. The service area should consider commissioning an independent cost-benefit analysis and impact assessment on the immediate and longer term benefits of all out of county placements, which is to include health benefits and sustainability of the skills individuals may acquire when placed out of county, with a particular focus on those diagnosed with high, complex needs. Such work should also include benchmarking costs against other local authorities in order to determine the possibility of providing individuals with greater opportunities for alternative provision, including out of county placements where appropriate. Such formal evaluation will also greatly assist the development of local models. **(KF3, 23, 25, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 50, 62, 64, 65)**

**R29** Within the work of the Accommodation Strategy which is currently being developed to identify, develop and improve local options, the service area should look to include buildings not currently in use, particularly those located in the suburbs of Cardiff with more grounds. **(KF3, 34, 62, 64, 65)**

#### Monitoring & Review

**R30** A robust review process of an individual's health, well-being and skill set must exist for all individuals who have transitioned from an out of county provision. This process should include specific assessment measures, which are captured both pre and post move in order to determine any potential 'impact' of a transition. Such monitoring will more greatly ensure that an individual's quality of life and skill set are both maintained and developed within provisions. This plan for specific assessment measures should be developed in line with the providers and subsequently shared with all concerned parties including the individual and their family (*where appropriate*). **(KF45, 50, 57, 60, 61)**

**COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY**  
**COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**



Councillor Ali Ahmed



Councillor Shaun Jenkins  
**(Chairman)**



Councillor Joe Carter



Councillor Andrea Gibson



Councillor Norma Mackie



Councillor Ashley Lister



Councillor Philippa Hill-John



Councillor Sue Lent



Councillor Mary McGarry

