

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION: 12 SEPTEMBER 2018****WHOLE LIFE DISABILITY STRATEGY****DRAFT MINUTE EXTRACT**

The Commission considered a joint report of the Director of Adults and Communities and the Director of Children and Families which presented the County Council's Whole Life Disability Strategy and associated document "Preparing for adulthood – a protocol for young people with special education needs or a disability" which described how children and young people should be involved in decisions about their care and support. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i) The Commission requested that the description 'disabled people' be changed to 'people with disabilities' as 'people first' language is considered more appropriate and respectful. It was agreed that this request would be put to the Cabinet at its meeting on 14 September.
- (ii) The Commission welcomed the development of the Strategy and the aspirations set out in, particularly the aspirational opportunities available to children with disabilities once they reached adulthood. However, some concern was expressed that they would be difficult to achieve and could unfairly raise expectations, especially given the Council's current financial position. The Commission was assured that the Strategy was honest as well as aspirational. Where difficulties had been identified through the consultation they were referenced in the report and information and signposting advice would be provided, even where a solution could not be found.
- (iii) The Adults and Communities Department sought to manage expectations and demand through working with people to enable them to become more independent. This included living independently, being engaged in employment activities and having control of a Personal Budget. The Department needed to consider the way in which it provided services to people in order to facilitate their independence, recognising that there were some people with complex disabilities who would always require support from the State to meet their needs.
- (iv) The consultation used to inform the Strategy had been undertaken by PeopleToo and a report, providing a detailed breakdown of the consultation, had been produced. The Children and Families Department engaged closely with the Parent Carer Forum on an ongoing basis and had also employed a Voice Worker to ensure that children and families' voices were regularly heard

as part of service development. The Adults and Communities Department also had advocacy arrangements in place. These methods of continuous engagement would be used to support the implementation of the Strategy. Members welcomed the effort that had been put into consultation and engagement in this area of work.

- (v) Members commented on the importance of monitoring delivery of the Strategy. It was noted that performance indicators which related to the Strategy were already reported to the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A report the previous day had confirmed that, during Quarter 1, 11.6% of people with Learning Difficulties were in employment; this was the second highest figure nationally. The stretch target was set at 9%; this would be altered as it ought to be more challenging than current performance.
- (vi) Although the Council already had a range of transition services in place, the development of the Strategy had encouraged the two departments to work more closely together. The Transitions Team and the Children with Disabilities Team met regularly and identified those children who would transition into adult services at an early stage. The intention was for the assessments to also take place earlier, preferably when the child was 14 rather than 17 as was currently the case. This should be followed up with light touch engagement from the Transitions Team and a named contact.
- (vii) Not all children in receipt of children's social care services would meet the eligibility criteria for adult services; however the Strategy clarified that these children would still need support in preparing for adulthood and identifying opportunities. It was noted that, whilst the Strategy focused specifically on the offer available to children with disabilities, all children required some support in preparing for adulthood; this was addressed through the Education Excellence Partnership.
- (viii) One of the pillars of independence related to the availability of accessible and adapted housing. The County Council was working with district councils to ensure that existing housing was adapted and also thinking about the future accommodation offer, which should include lifetime homes. A business case was currently being developed proposing capital investment to meet both the specialist and non-specialist needs of people with disabilities.
- (ix) Concern was expressed that some colleges assessed people with learning difficulties for apprenticeships without allowing them to use assistive technology. The Commission was advised that a Preparing for Adulthood reference group, including representatives from Further Education Colleges. It was intended that this would address issues such as the one now raised.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Cabinet at its meeting on 14 September be advised that the Scrutiny Commission supports the Whole Life Disability Strategy;

- (b) That the Cabinet be recommended to change the wording in the Strategy from 'disabled people' to 'people with disabilities'.

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