



Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Extract from the Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 19 January 2017

Personal Independence Payments

- 9 Members considered a report from the Citizen's Advice Bureau which highlighted an investigation in to Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

The Chairman welcomed Ann Evans, the Advice Services Manager from the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) in Dorchester to the meeting. She drew members' attention to the research and campaign work part of CAB which looked at what problems people were having and recorded things that appeared unfair.

All work was evidence based and showed that a high number of problems were being experienced with Personal Independence Payments (PIP) which had taken over from the disability living allowance. She highlighted that this was a national problem but was hugely affecting people within Dorset. The poor quality of medical assessments being carried out was also highlighted. This resulted in months of waiting for an appeal and virtually every appeal the CAB attended was won, which reflected the poor decision making by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The whole system was disadvantaging people and the CAB were still seeing the same number affecting the most vulnerable people in local communities.

One member highlighted the people with terminal illnesses and the delays they experienced in getting the hospital consultants to sign the forms to say they were eligible to apply for PIP.

The County Councillor for Dorchester, who also represented West Dorset as a liaison member for the CAB, felt this was a very powerful report and hoped that the County Council would lend its support to the problem.

The Director undertook to liaise with the Interim Director for Adult and Community Services to see if collectively they could gain support. As it was a national issue she would see if the Association of Directors for Children's Services (ADCS) were also picking this up. She also felt that a joint letter to Department for Education (DFE) and Department of Health (DoH) could be a useful route.

The County Councillor for Dorchester felt sure that the Dorset MPs must be aware but to date no effective action to bring about a positive change had been made. The Chairman urged the CAB to bring it to the Dorset MPs attention.

The Chairman suggested writing to the DWP drawing this report to their attention and asking for their comments. One member suggested contacting the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) with reference to hospital administrative delays.

The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance acknowledged that this particular issue clearly demonstrated how the new Overview and Scrutiny Committees were taking interest in a much broader view of outcomes across Dorset, rather than just those issues or services that were delivered directly by the County Council. The potential for the County Council to lend its support in calls for improvement in the PIP process was about being outcome focussed, looking for better outcomes for individuals. This demonstrated a great strength in organisations joining together.

Resolved

1. That a letter be set to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) setting out members' concerns.
2. That the Director raise the issue with the ADCS.
3. That the Director write a joint letter with the interim Director for Adult and Community Services to DFE and DoH.