



Wirral Evolutions – Pensby Wood Day Centre
Adult Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Member Visit

February 2019



1. Background

The Pensby Wood Centre is a purpose-built facility that provides care and support for adults with Profound Multiple Learning Disabilities from across Wirral and beyond.

In recent years, a number of issues had been identified with the site that meant it was no longer fully meeting the needs of those that visited – with doors too narrow for wheelchair access and some areas too small to be fit for purpose. As a result, a capital bid for £1.2m of investment was approved by the Council and refurbishment works took place at the Centre between June 2017 and June 2018.

At the meeting of the Health and Care Performance Panel on 8th October 2018, Members requested that further information be provided on the completed refurbishment of the Centre, with a view to obtaining more detail around the improvements made to the facility. As a result, a briefing note from Wirral Evolutions was circulated to Panel members for information in February 2019, with the organisation extending an invitation to all Members of the Adult Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee to visit the site to see the results of the refurbishment first hand.

2. Facility Tour Overview

On 12th February 2019, Members were welcomed to the Pensby Wood facility and given a comprehensive tour of the building; seeing many of the features, rooms and specialist equipment in use. The Centre Manager, Christine Rothwell, informed Members that there are currently 26 people registered at Pensby Wood, with 23 people in the building at any one time. There are also currently 8 people on the waiting list, with interest coming from as far away as Cheshire. Members were keen to find out how the people supported spent their time at the centre and were helpfully advised that during the day, the people supported will generally take part in two activities in the morning, and two in the afternoon – with a variety of different activities to choose from, enabling their life skills and experiences to be developed or enhanced.

There are a wide range of interactive activities available at Pensby Wood, with Members initially welcomed into an arts and crafts session, where the people supported were making Mother's Day cards from a choice of different materials. In the next room, a cooking activity was taking place, with cupcakes and brownies on the menu. Members were informed that there is a real sensory experience in the cooking activity, as people supported are able to get 'hands on' with the textures of different ingredients such as flour and butter. Members queried how staff intensive the activities were and were advised that this can very much be dependent on the activity itself and the complexity of need of those involved. Cooking, for example, takes place as a 'one on one' activity - however, the assignment of carers is very much dependent on individuals.

Members were next introduced to the outdoor area which hosted features such as a shallow fountain at wheelchair height and the first wheelchair swing for adults on Wirral. The nearby garden room is very popular in the summer time and gives an opportunity to benefit from the outdoor environment, with an accessible sensory garden filled with wildlife friendly plants.

One of the most popular rooms during the visit was the music room, which displayed a powerful wall decoration stating, 'Music speaks where words fail'. It was emphasised that many of the people supported don't communicate using formal methods - music enables the ability to express enjoyment, learn new skills and help people work together. During the singing, instrument-playing and applause Councillors were encouraged to clap along to the music, a request to which they happily obliged. Located next door was the spa room for relaxation and care – where even a simple face mask provides a sensory experience for people supported. Members were particularly impressed with the level of decoration that had been afforded to the personal care rooms, with the ceilings of each painted to include clouds, doves and sea life providing a welcome distraction whilst personal care is taking place.

Another area that has benefitted hugely from the investment is the pool area. Although the facility had previously included a pool, Members were informed that it was often leaking and unusable, with thousands of pounds previously required for maintenance. Now however, the pool room is a calm and serene area and features a hoist system in place from the changing area to the pool. Members queried how many people can use the pool at any one time, and how long they can use it for. The centre manager advised that, as with other activities, it is dependent on the complexity of need for the individual - however it does generally tend to be one at a time, or two people at most. Medical needs of the people supported are also considered in order for the pool to be used safely and each individual can use the pool for approximately 20 minutes due to the heat of the pool and the room itself. Members were pleased to hear from staff that, although there had been some initial issues with the new pool pump, to witness someone using the pool and experience the freedom of movement makes it all worthwhile.

The building tour concluded with Members being welcomed into a stimulating interactive projection room. This room provides a really special experience where a number of immersive projections such as a beach scene and an underwater scene allow the people supported to explore and interact with different environments without risk. They can engage with the scene by simply touching the wall, allowing them involvement in realistic scenarios. The room also enables individual engagement, with Members advised that for one person, a football fan, videos of Liverpool FC are projected. Members were able to see the room in use first hand and to experience the joy that it brought.

3. Summary of Discussion

Following the tour of the facility, Members were able to discuss future plans for the Wirral Evolutions organisation. Managing Director, Jean Stephens, informed Members that the strategic focus will be based on social and economic outcomes that place the people they support at the heart. Wirral Evolutions work will ensure that lives are enriched, wellbeing is improved, life skills are developed and communities are integrated. She shared with Members the bid for £2m capital investment for the development of a new multi-purpose facility to the rear of Leasowe Leisure Centre. This hub will provide a holistic health and wellbeing service for people with learning and physical disabilities who currently access the provision at the Cambridge Road Day Centre. This is a joint venture is between Wirral Evolutions and Wirral Council leisure services.

There is also a significant focus on volunteering, with particular emphasis given to their contribution and prioritisation of a volunteer strategy – an approach that has been acknowledged as part of the organisation’s strategic framework. Alongside this, Members were informed that there is a real focus on engagement with the local community and that placements for nursing students from Liverpool and Chester Universities have been arranged. Wirral Evolutions are also looking at an improved offer for young people, with plans to provide digital training and activities to capture the needs of younger people with learning disabilities, and a drive to promote the services at local schools and colleges.

Members questioned if the service at Pensby Wood was growing. Although there are consistent numbers of people supported, the various types of needs that can be supported change and improve over time – with plenty of opportunity to grow.

Following a Member query as to what degree staff are trained and upskilled, the centre manager gave assurance that regular specialist training takes place and that staff have particularly strong relationships with speech and language specialists, along with dieticians and health practitioners.

Members were keen to find out the direction of travel for Wirral Evolutions, particularly as a local authority company model for Wirral. The Chair, Mike Naden, expressed his willingness to share experiences for future authority organisations in order to share best practice and learnings going forward. As an organisation, Wirral Evolutions are keen to remain open and transparent, and ensure that lines of communication with local communities are sustained. The organisation is looking at doing things differently and raising the profile of current and future developments. Although the refurbishment work at Pensby Wood has enabled huge improvements and had a real impact, there is still work to be done with the other facilities to ensure centres across Wirral can offer the best care to the most vulnerable residents.

4. Summary of Actions

Members requested that future developments and updates from Wirral Evolutions are brought before the Adult Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee periodically and in conjunction with the Adult Social Care leadership team, so that Members can be kept aware of progress.

More information about Wirral Evolutions Strategic Framework can be found here - [Wirral Evolutions Strategic Framework 2024](#), or by visiting www.wirralevolutions.org

Appendix 1 – Attendees

Cllr Sharon Jones

Cllr Wendy Clements

Mike Naden, Chair – Wirral Evolutions

Jean Stephens, Managing Director – Wirral Evolutions

Lorraine Moran, Head of Quality – Wirral Evolutions

Chris Rothwell – Centre Manager

Alex Davidson – Scrutiny Officer, Wirral Council

