

Appendix 6: Audits Revisited

Purpose of these audits

To assess whether the actions agreed in the original audit report have been implemented and are now effectively embedded into the day-to-day operation of the service.

Direct Payment Support Service Contract Management Revisited

Original Objective

To assess whether the contract is being effectively managed to ensure the Council's key outcomes for the service and service users are delivered, whilst also ensuring sound financial arrangements are in place.

Summary

A previous internal audit review was conducted to assess whether the Direct Payment Support Service Contract with Vibrance (the contractor) was being effectively managed to ensure the Council's key outcomes for the service and service users are being delivered, whilst also ensuring sound financial arrangements were in place.

Since issuing of the original internal audit report, limited progress has been made in implementing the agreed management actions. Progress has been hindered by unexpected factors, primarily relating to staff turnover as well as the Covid-19 pandemic which has required redeployed staff to maintain services during a difficult period.

However, a dedicated resource was appointed in June 2021 to aid the Council with reviewing its arrangements with the contractor and progressing the remaining outstanding management actions from the original audit report.

At the time of reporting the results of our revisit, the following progress has been made:

- The monthly (now bi-monthly) operational meeting agenda had been updated to capture key aspects of service delivery and enhancing the corresponding quarterly activity return to include a log of safeguarding and any other concerns.
- The contractor's policies have been reviewed to confirm they reflect necessary Mental Health Capacity Act and safeguarding requirements, as well as aligning to Council policies. Two minor amendments are required which remain outstanding.
- There are a number of areas where further work is still required in order to improve the contract management arrangements. These relate to areas that will assist the Council in holding the contractor accountable to performance measures and also safeguard client monies as they are processed through the contract. In summary:
 - A draft set of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) have been collated by the Council, but there is no formal evidence that these have been agreed by both parties. Further work is still required to ensure all outcomes expected of the contract, including the financial requirements, are suitably covered by the suite of KPIs.

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- The existing annual satisfaction survey is still being reviewed and a revised version, considering the above KPIs and the client's experience of account statements, is still to be formally agreed and implemented as part of the contractor's next cycle of feedback.
- The quarterly activity return has been updated for reporting safeguarding returns and staff training, but still needs to report on the KPIs when they have been agreed. Any further amendments need to be formally agreed and subsequently implemented.
- Ongoing review of contractor staff compliance with Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks and determining whether the confirmation of completion needs to include copies of certification, if this is allowable under GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Formalise the arrangements for gaining assurance over the accuracy and completeness of client funds held by the contractor, including spot checks and financial reporting that the Council can use to reconcile / monitor against their own records.
- Implementation of a revised client statement covering letter that covers the reason for the statement and actions to be taken by the client if it is incorrect or if they have any queries relating to the statement.
- Introduction of a periodic highlight report to the Interim Director of Adult Social Care on performance, risks and issues arising. It is understood this is to be discussed internally to determine what this reporting covers and if the proposed contractor reporting being developed can be used to inform this internal reporting, before proceeding.

Management are now proactively engaged with the contractor to address the outstanding management actions in a timely manner. If this progresses as planned, this will help to ensure effective governance and monitoring arrangements are in place to safeguard Council clients, and also the monies that are held and managed by the contractor.

Results

Fully implemented	Substantially implemented	Partially implemented	Not implemented
3	0	7	2