

Adults Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 17 October 2023

Attendance

Members of the Adults Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Qaiser Azeem
Cllr Jenny Cockayne
Cllr Val Evans (Chair)
Cllr Christopher Haynes (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Linda Leach
Cllr Bob Maddox
Cllr Rohit Mistry
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Udey Singh
Cllr Paul Sweet

In Attendance

Paul Tulley, Wolverhampton Managing Director Integrated Care Board
Sian Thomas, DCOO at Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust and Partnership Director (RWHT)

Employees

Rachael Murphy	Head of Adult Services
Martin Stevens	Scrutiny Team Leader
Becky Wilkinson	Director of Adult Social Services
Jenny Rogers	Principal Social Worker

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Welcome and Introductions**
Cllr Val Evans, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised it was being live streamed to the press and public. A recording of the meeting would be available for viewing on the Council's website at a future date.
- 2 Meeting procedures to be followed**
Cllr Evans explained the protocol to be followed during the meeting for asking questions.
- 3 Apologies**
Apologies were received from the following:

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Iqra Tahir
- 4 Declarations of Interest**
No declarations of interest recorded.

5 **Minutes of previous meeting (21 March 2023)**
Minutes of Meeting 21 March 2023 approved as correct record.

6 **Post Covid Position – update briefing**
The Chair invited Becky Wilkinson, Director of Adult Services (DAS), to present the briefing.

The DAS advised the panel that when the review was originally scheduled in June 2023 to be presented the Covid-19 count situation was zero. However, the updated Covid-19 situation reflects a changed situation where there have been nine outbreaks in care homes of infectious diseases since June 2023 and two of the outbreaks are ongoing. There has recently been increase in the number of infection cases as the weather has started to change.

The DAS gave a summary of the headlines and background to statistics relating to Adult Services, for example, overall service users are now above pre-pandemic numbers with over 4,000 people with an active service agreement, care home numbers are beginning to show an upward trend, which dropped significantly during Covid 19 pandemic.

The DAS advised that at the time of the original update there were no outbreaks of Covid-19 cases in care homes, but recently there has been an increase.

The DAS commented on changes to testing regime for Covid-19 and not as many tests are being done. The spring Covid-19 booster campaign had a low initial uptake across care home residents at the time but since then there is evidence of improved uptake of booster vaccines. A further vaccine booster rollout programme by Primary Care Networks to all care home residents will be completed by 22 October 2023

The Director added that the Infection Prevention and Control Service will continue to support care homes and has offered to provide a range of training to all care home settings in preparation for the winter months. The situation will be reviewed in conjunction with colleagues in health and public health.

The Director commented that the way Covid -19 is managed has changed in recent months and people will be tested if they are immunosuppressant. The advice from Public Health England is that general testing should not be done and there is evidence of a rising numbers of Covid -19 cases.

The expectation is that the number of flu and Covid 19 cases will increase ahead of the winter period. The rollout of the autumn vaccine booster programme including care home residents, and front-line care, health and social care workers is expected to help keep the number of cases under control.

The Director reassured the panel that the service will continue to with colleagues in the sector to manage the situation in best way possible.

The Chair thanked the presenter for the update and invited panel members for their comments and questions.

A panel member queried if in response to rising numbers of infection cases in care homes, a decision will be made to close them and asked for more information about

the plans for supporting care homes in a situation when residents are not being routinely being tested.

The Director commented that the Council works closely with care home providers so that do tests. If more than one member of care staff or a resident has had an infection, then a case-by-case approach will be taken and advice from Public Health and Infection Prevention and Control Service in infection prevention is offered.

The Director commented that in a recent situation a decision was taken to restrict entry to new residents into a care home following an outbreak, while work was done to bring the infection situation under control. There are two outbreaks currently.

A panel member asked for further information about if a care home would be closed in response to an outbreak. The Director reaffirmed the position that if there is more than one case then a decision to close a care home would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

A panel member commented on the increase in cases asked for further details about the variant strain of Covid-19 and if the effect on resident was mild or more severe.

The Director commented that the tests for Covid-19 do not identify the variant. The Director agreed to speak to the Director of Public Health to get the information requested and will share it with the panel.

A panel member commented a recent experience following a visit to hospital and the number of staff with Covid -19 working in the hospital as they not required to isolate at home and suggested that was important to remember that while it might be a milder strain it is still resulting in some people being hospitalised for treatment.

The Director commented that the general advice is that people should not mix when they are feeling unwell and noted the concern highlighted.

The Chair thanked the presenter for the update report.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to note the report.

7 **Adult Social Care Winter Planning 2023-24**

The Chair invited Becky Wilkinson Director of Adults Social Care, to introduce the report.

The Director advised the panel the presentation would be given jointly with the following representatives - Paul Tulley, Wolverhampton Managing Director Integrated Care Board, Sian Thomas, DCOO at Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust and Partnership Director RWHT and Rachel Murphy, Head of Adult Services.

The Director gave a brief explanation of the One Wolverhampton Partnership role in the development of the draft Winter Plan document.

The partnership was based on previous joint work done in response to national changes to Integrated Care Board and Integrated Care Systems. The One Wolverhampton Partnership Board brings together representatives from social care, primary care, voluntary and community organisations and local GPs.

The aim is to work together to ensure that people in Wolverhampton have the right care in the right place at the right time and work better together with a focus on health inequalities.

The Director commented that the draft Winter Plan is a result of 12 months' work with partners and is a good example of how the partnership arrangements are working. The Director added that Paul Tulley, Wolverhampton Managing Director Integrated Care Board and Sian Thomas, DCOO at Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust were invited to contribute to the presentation and reflects the close working relationship among the partner organisations involved.

The Director advised the panel that current draft builds on the lessons learnt from the key initiatives developed in the previous Winter Plan presented for comment and the aim is to build on what worked and did not work.

The work on the Winter Plan started in July 2023. The Director commented that the quality of the Winter Plan was recognised by the Kings Fund and the partnership has been working with the organisation, who have provided advice and feedback, on how the Board can work better together taking a whole system approach.

The Director commented that the essential aim of the Winter Plan is to keep people in the right place at the right time and that they get the right care. The work is monitored by the Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) Strategic Working Group. The Director listed the priorities of One Wolverhampton UEC and highlighted the focus on how partners work together to discharge people from hospital in a timely way and a shared approach to manage demand.

The Director invited Paul Tulley, Wolverhampton Managing Director Integrated Care Board to comment on the current position as regards levels of demand and bed capacity.

The Managing Director advised the panel that as part of preparing for winter period hospitals were asked by Government to look at their bed base position and analyse what happened in the last winter. The Managing Director gave details of the future projections about the number of people expected to be admitted to hospital and commented on the best-and worst-case scenario based on current modelling assumptions about who will be coming into hospital. The modelling work predicts a worse case deficit of between 37 and 53 general and acute beds heading into winter which is expected to peak in January 2024 without any extra mitigation work or increased capacity.

The Director gave examples of the work being done together as a partnership to help reduce or fully mitigate the budget deficit situation, highlighting the provision of more care being provided through RWT 'virtual wards'.

The overall aim is to ensure that people who no longer need to stay in hospital that there is support in place either at home or an appropriate place for them to receive ongoing care.

The DAS commented on the progress of Adult Social Care Discharge Fund and explained how the award of £3.5 million for 2023/2024 was allocated. £2.1 million awarded to City of Wolverhampton Council and £1.4 million to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) Wolverhampton Place.

The Director of Adult Social Care commented that a key focus of the fund is making sure that there is capacity within the system by introducing innovative solutions. The funding scheme aims help people to support them when they are ready to leave hospital and highlighted the value of partnership working in responding and preparing for the pressures facing the service.

The Director of Adult Social Care invited Paul Tulley, Wolverhampton Managing Director Integrated Care Board, to present the next section of the presentation.

The Wolverhampton Managing Director commented that as previously stated that the focus of the funding was on hospital discharge schemes. Most discharge schemes were evaluated, as being successful.

The Wolverhampton Managing Director commented on the range of the work done to ensure that there is enough capacity of intermediate care beds in the hospital to support a rapid flow of discharge patients who need to be in the community.

The Wolverhampton Managing Director highlighted a scheme supporting patients in the community who would otherwise be admitted to hospital and an initiative with the Black Country Health Mental Care Trust to support the discharge patients from mental health beds at the same time. The aims are to identify areas of current service that may need more support, the continued development of core services and to build on the new initiatives in future years.

The DAS commented on the partnership schemes funded jointly between CWC and ICB and gave examples of different schemes and initiatives being trialled to support adult care as part of the Winter Plan preparation. The DAS highlighted the dedicated Non-Weight Bearing (NWB) Patients Trial which tests alternative placement arrangements for NWB patients to determine future ongoing approaches and arrangements.

The DAS invited Sian Thomas, Deputy Chief Operating Officer (DCCO) at Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust (RWHT) and Partnership Director, to continue with the presentation.

The DCCO highlighted examples of work done by RWHT, making sure that ambulances can arrive, handover their patients in a timely manner which is critical for patient safety. The DCCO commented on the work done to support people back into the community who are medically fit and no longer require care at the hospital.

The DCCO added that the hospital is working to improve internal hospital processes and will continue working with partners to support people to stay at home and leave hospital as soon as possible.

The DAS commented on the range of support offered to staff, highlighting the wellbeing offer for both RWT and CWC to provide support for physical, emotional, mental, and financial wellbeing. The Director added that pressure on the workforce is expected to increase throughout the winter period. The DAS added that this will create workforce challenges and risks to the delivery of services across health and social care as delivery of the schemes are dependent on being able to recruit the staff required.

The DAS commented that future priorities and specific projects that could start if funding becomes available. The presentation gives an overview of the range of work done by the partnership during the previous seven months as part of the winter planning preparation. The DAS reassured the panel that the partnership is as prepared as possible for the winter period, while accepting that it will be a challenging period.

The DAS invited the panel to comment on the report and presentation.

A panel member queried the arrangements when a patient has been discharged from hospital and wanted assurance that arrangements would be seamless to avoid any issues when a person arrives home.

Rachel Murphy, Head of Adult Services, advised the panel that Wolverhampton offers a 'Homes First' model which recognises that home is the best place for people to return to, if this is possible. The service will continue collaborating closely with colleagues in RWHT to identify the persons needs upon discharge from hospital and whether they are ready to go home.

The Head of Adult Services added that this process will also be supported by colleagues in the Reablement Intermediate Care who provide the service at no charge to the person for the first six weeks. A care package is also provided to help the person to recover as quickly as possible after an assessment of their needs.

A further assessment will be done several weeks later to consider the persons long term care needs and different options.

The issue will be discussed with the person and family members and or people who are significant to determine their long-term care need arrangements.

A panel member queried the allocation of £3,453,504 to Wolverhampton Place for the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund for 2023/24 and asked the DAS if the schemes listed in the presentation could be achieved within the budget allocated. The plans for using the estimated underspend of £592,599 on the agreed schemes listed for CWC and the ICB was also queried.

The DAS commented that there will be challenges arising during the period of the Winter Plan which have not necessarily been accounted for at this stage. A decision was made to withhold some of the allocated funds to be able to respond to this situation as there is an expectation of unforeseen spend before the winter period starts.

A panel member queried the plans for responding to the workforce challenge of recruiting social workers at a time of high demand nationally for people with the required skills and experience and the plans for responding to this issue.

The DAS reassured the panel that the Council is competing for staff and commented on the recruitment challenges last year, highlighting the difficulty in recruiting people on short term contracts. The DAC added that in response to this situation additional CWC funds had allocated to the budget to help retain employees whose contracts had not ended. This approach has provided additional capacity, and this was work supported by a recruitment promotion in July 2023.

The DAS reassured the panel that lessons from last year and using national funds allocated with local match funding in more creative way. The DAS highlighted the challenge of recruiting agency staff on short term contracts.

A panel member queried the amount of funds being held back. The DAS confirmed that the amount is £400,000.

A panel queried the enhanced support offered to people who are vulnerable and with challenging needs, including those with mental health referred to in the presentation.

The Head of Adult Services advised the panel that as part of the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund there is extra funds to support P3 a local charity that supports people who are either homeless or rough sleeping in Wolverhampton.

There are members of P3 based in RWHT working with discharge co-ordinators to help people secure discharge into temporary accommodation.

The Head of Adult Services work added that the work is also supported by colleagues in Public Health to ensure people who are homeless do not stay in hospital longer than necessary, for example support with drug or alcohol addiction.

The DCCO added that the hospital focuses on prevention and offering support to people who are homeless and additional funds have given to a GP practice to work in the city centre hostel, offering appointments on site, health advice and screening to help identify needs before hospitalisation is required.

A panel queried if the number of homeless people supported was increasing or decreasing over time. The DAS agreed to check and would report back the information to the panel.

A panel member queried if there was a process for sharing local winter plan challenges and lessons learnt to give a national picture which can then be shared at the local and regional levels to improve practice.

The Wolverhampton Managing Director Integrated Care Board commented that there is a lessons learnt exercise at the end of each winter planning period. The information is used to inform plans and there is the opportunity to highlight issues with the Integrated Care System and then share these with the regional team.

In addition, there is independent work with the Kings Fund which provides another opportunity to share national best practice about what has worked well, and the information will be used in the development of the local winter plan.

The Chair thanked the presenters for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel approved the Adult Social Care planned activity and preparedness for winter 2023 - 2024 as outlined in the Adult Social Care Winter Planning 2023-2024 presentation.
2. The Director of Adult Social Care to report back to the panel after March 2024 on the impact and progress of the new ways of working and initiatives detailed in the Adult Social Care Winter Planning 2023-2024 presentation.

8 **Principal Social Worker Annual Report**

The Chair invited Jenny Rogers, Principal Social Worker (PSW), to present the report.

The PSW advised the panel that the report is published annually. The report details an assessment of social work practice across Children's and Adult's Services during 2022 - 2023 and the main priorities for 2023 - 2024.

The PSW advised the panel that this is a joint role covering children's and adults and the main remit is the recruitment and retention of social workers and social work staff given the national challenges in this area.

The PSW is also responsible for overseeing learning and development, quality assurance. The team managed by the PSW is responsible for overseeing policies and procedures, as well as inspection activity, including now CQC assurance activity. The annual report covers children's and adults social work, but the focus of the presentation would be on adults as this is within the remit of the panel.

The PSW outlined the key areas of responsibility covered by the role and achievements and progress to date.

The PSW outlined the key priorities for 2023-2024.

The issue of recruitment and retention will remain a key priority. The PSW commented that further work planned to develop the Quality Assurance Framework and the feedback from people receiving services was seen as being central to understanding what good social work practice looks like.

The PSW highlighted the work of the team in developing the quality assurance frameworks and associated quality assurance activity for Adults, SEND and Children's Services.

The PSW also the plans to support the wellbeing of social workers by looking at a trauma informed approach across the service. The work will cover trauma informed supervision, training for social managers, and seeing what more can be done in terms of policies and procedures to reduce the risk of secondary trauma and provide help and support. The PSW highlighted the issue of secondary trauma as important area of work.

The DAS commented that the role of PSW is a statutory role and there is a commitment to keep the independence of the role to allow. The DAS commented on the critical friend role of the PSW in reviewing and raising concerns about policy and decision making. The DAS highlighted an example where she was challenged by the PSW to ensure the Council is compliant with the requirements of the Care Act 2014.

The DAS wanted to formally record her appreciation for the work done by the PSW, highlighting examples of excellent work done during the year and that she should be proud of achievements detailed in the annual report.

The panel endorsed the comments about the excellent work and professionalism of the PSW in meeting her responsibilities.

A panel member queried the issue raised when a similar report was presented and the request at the time that the figures should be shown alongside percentages used to give context to the assessments being made. A request was made to check this information is included in future reports to the panel.

The PSW advised the panel that the comments refer to the social health check report which is scheduled to be presented at the next meeting. The report will include figures alongside percentages. The point about the current report was noted.

A panel member queried the impact on social work caseload levels because of the shortages and recruitment challenges highlighted in the report and how this was being managed.

The PSW advised the panel that the issue of casework was highlighted in the annual social work health check annual report. The importance of good supervision was highlighted and a recognition of the need to consider the complexity of the cases and the experience of the social worker. The value of good reflective supervision was highlighted as an example of the offer to social workers to understand the impact of cases.

The PSW commented that the trauma informed approach referred to in the presentation will help the service to think about the about the emotional demands on social workers and recognise early signs in terms of sickness absence which may be as a result burnout. The level of sickness absence is monitored, and support offered by the team and social work managers. The PSW added that as part of service redesign plans there will be work done to look at the skill mixing in teams and the level of demand to help reduce demands on social workers.

The Head of Adult Services added that the Councils employee assistance programmes also provides a wide range of support and advice. The service offers 24-hour access to counselling support in addition to the formal social work supervision.

A panel member endorsed the earlier comment about the inclusion of numbers alongside numbers should be used in future annual reports.

A panel member queried the policy of offering incentives to recruit and retain social workers and what would happen where someone decided later to leave the Council at a future date.

The PSW commented on the legal restrictions that apply to apprenticeships in applying such a policy. The expectation is that when people complete an apprenticeship will stay with the Council for at least two years.

The PSW added that the offer to newly qualified social workers is good and gave examples for career progression or development opportunities.

The PSW added that people will tend to leave the Council after they have qualified. In the first-year social workers have a protected workload which ends at this stage. The team is developing support for social workers to lessen the 'cliff edge' effect in the change from the first year to the second year to help them manage the extra workload.

The PSW commented that the Council wants to keep people who have joined to stay and outlined other ideas being considered to support this, for example, experienced social workers operating a buddy system to support newly qualified social workers.

A panel member queried if there is a similar arrangement with University of Wolverhampton with other universities to encourage local people to consider a career in social work.

The PSW advised the panel that the Council is working with the University of Birmingham on research projects, and this relationship led to the PhD sponsorship for social workers. Several social workers are currently working on their PhDs. This arrangement has helped to bring academics and social workers much closer together.

The PSW commented on the work done to promote careers in social work and share innovative practice on webinars and the hope is that this will attract people to consider working for the Council.

The Chair thanked the presenter for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel supported the recommendations in the Principal Social Worker Annual report 2023 – 2024:
 - Endorse the work of the Principal Social Worker and the continued impact it has on social work practice across Children’s and Adult’s Services.
 - Approve the main priorities for the Principal Social Worker identified for 2023-2024.
2. The panel recommend that future reports include figures alongside percentages figures, where appropriate.

9 **Adults Scrutiny Panel Draft Work Programme 2023 2024**

The Chair invited Martin Stevens (DL) (Scrutiny Lead) to present the report.

The Scrutiny Lead advised the panel of the report items scheduled for the rest of the municipal year.

The panel agreed to add an update report on impact of the Winter Plan to the work programme for 2024-2025.

The Chair thanked the presenter for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to note the annual report.
2. The Director of Adult Services to present an update on the Winter Plan to panel in 2024.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]