

Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 11 June 2019

Attendance

Members of the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Simon Bennett (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Olivia Birch
Cllr Val Evans (Chair)
Cllr Sohail Khan
Cllr Asha Mattu
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Anwen Muston
Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman

Employees

Martin Stevens (Scrutiny Officer) (Minutes)
John Denley (Director of Public Health)
David Watts (Director of Adult Services)
Louise Haughton (Principal Social Worker)
Jennifer Rogers (Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner)

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies**
The Portfolio Holder, Cllr Linda Leach sent her apologies.
- 2 **Declarations of Interest**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 **Minutes of previous meetings (26 March 2019)**
The minutes of the meeting held on the 26 March 2019 were approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Cllr Sohail Khan, declaration of a non-pecuniary interest as a Blue Badge Holder.
- 4 **Matters arising**
A Member of the Panel requested that the Scrutiny Officers ensure that a report be added to the Work Programme for the September meeting detailing progress in responding to the issues highlighted in the report received at the last meeting on blue

badges and specifically on changes to the eligibility criteria and delays in the assessment process.

5 **Update on File Audits: 2018-2019**

The Director of Adult Services in his opening remarks commented that not all local authorities in adult social care services carried out file audits. The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner stated that in 2018-2019 there had been over 120 file audits in City of Wolverhampton Council's Adult Social Services Department. In addition to these there had also been two audit the Auditor checks, to check the quality and consistency of the bi-monthly file audits. Dip sampling audits had been carried out to measure quality or address specific issues as part of the implementation of the 3 Conversations approach. More than 50 dip samples had been carried out in 2018/19. There had also been two thematic audits completed during the year.

The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner stated that file audits in adult social care in Wolverhampton took place every other month. The auditors ranged from front line managers all the way up to Director level. They measured files in terms of CQC ratings. There had been some fluctuation in the current year in quarter 2 and quarter 3. A new way of working had been introduced in July and they thought this may have helped to explain the dip in the results. However, they now believed it was down to overly optimistic previous ratings. In November work was undertaken with managers to discuss the findings of an audit the auditor audit carried out in July 2018, which may have led to a more critical approach being taken in November's audit in response to the feedback that some auditors were rating files as "good" when a lower rating would have been more appropriate.

The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner commented that there had been some high performance in a number of areas. These areas included, Making Safeguarding Personal, Demonstrating Dignity and Respect, Timelessness and Responsiveness and Continuity of Support. Additional areas which had become strengths from quarter one in the current year included, effective multi-agency working, clear and detailed eligibility and involvement of family members/carers. She was particularly pleased that there had been a significant improvement in care assessments in quarter 4.

The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner remarked that an area which required further improvement was in reflective and analytical thinking. Practitioners were not always recording their reflective discussions or thinking on people's files. A revised recording policy was disseminated to teams in January 2019 which contained a section on reflective recording to support practice and improve worker confidence. Another action to address the need for better recording of reflective practice included the introduction of a monthly manager support programme from April 2019 which would cover areas identified by audits. The aim was to support frontline managers improve quality and practice in their teams. Reflective recording would be the focus of the session in June 2019. They were keen to ensure the voice of the person was captured within files.

A Member of the Panel stated that he was aware of a very complicated case approximately two years ago where the legal guardianship had been taken away from a family who were looking after a sibling. A care bill of over 20,000 pounds had then been built up. She asked if financial management was one of the areas which

the social workers audited when going through the files. In response, the Director of Adults commented that financial matters should be included as part of the annual review. The management of finance was not a complaint which came up often in the complaints process. When they became aware of issues of finance with a particular person, the Council were able to offer the Appointeeship Service.

A Member of the Panel expressed surprise that some authorities did not complete social care file audits. She recommended that a report on this subject area in the future should have a glossary of terms due to the specialised language and phrases in social care. Whilst she thought the overall picture was good, she had two areas of concern which were highlighted within the report, these were risk assessment and analysis and reflective recording. She thought supervision on a six-week basis would help to resolve the two issues she had highlighted. A second member of the Panel echoed these views, adding that the risk assessment statistics in the last quarter had improved to 65%, but he was concerned this was still short of where the Council needed to be in an area of critical importance. He asked if there was going to be an ongoing programme of work or if the actions identified in the report to address the issues were one off action events. The Principal Social Worker responded to these comments by stating that there was an overall Workforce Development Plan. There were certain topics which would be revisited every year with risk, strength-based conversations and carers assessments falling in this category. In the current year they would be training a large number in the workforce on restorative approaches, which was about ensuring excellent strength-based relationship practice.

A Member of the Panel asked for how long the Council had been undertaking file audits in the adult social care service and how the latest statistics compared qualitatively to previous years. The Principal Social Worker responded that the Council had been carrying them out for the last three years. The report last year had shown more significant dramatic improvements from the year before. The current year had showed more continued gradual improvement across the areas highlighted within the report. She offered to include a comparison in next year's report from the previous year.

A Member of the Panel asked if the Adult Social Care service was being consistently challenged in particular areas across the years. In response the Principal Social Worker stated that one area they always struggled with was recording reflective practice. Social workers did not always find the time to record their reflective practice in the way that they would like. Such reflective practice had often been carried out but not formally recorded. In the present year they were changing the operating model and consequently had adjusted their recording forms. She hoped that this change would make a real difference to recording practices. Training, team meetings and reflective sessions were further ways of reminding staff about the importance of recording reflective practice. The Director of Adults Services echoed the Principal Social Worker's points regarding recording reflective practice. Next year he hoped to be able to incorporate some independent case file audit work from the work that was being done as part of the sector led improvement peer reviews in the West Midlands. Other authorities tended to struggle in the same areas as Wolverhampton.

A Member of the Panel referred to paragraph 3.2 in the report, which stated that almost 5% of people who received a service from Adult Social Care in

Wolverhampton had received some form of qualitative audit in 2018-2019. He asked for further information as to why it was at 5% and if there was any intention to increase the amount in the future. The Director of Adult Services responded that 5% was actually quite high compared to the authorities that did carry out file audits in social care. If more audits were carried out there would not be the time to ensure they were of a high standard and so some of the insights would be lost. The Principal Social Worker commented that often only a small sample was needed to pick up on patterns and themes quite quickly. When they went to other authorities to help with file audits, they would pick a maximum of 30 files.

A Member of the Panel asked who determined which files were chosen to audit. The Principal Social Worker responded that there was an Insight Performance Team who used a set criteria.

Resolved: That the report be noted by the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel and the Panel's comments be taken account of in future reports on Adult Social Care File Audits.

- 6 **Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel Draft Work Programme 2019-20**
Members requested that the Principal Social Worker Annual Report be added to the Work Plan for the meeting in September. They expressed concern that it was not being received at the current meeting as had been previously advised. The Director for Adults Services stated that the Labour Group had raised some issues about the report not containing much information on outcomes and individuals. A Member of the Panel added that they were concerned the report did not contain enough information about matters relating to equalities. They wanted the report to show which groups they had been working with on these issues and for the report to show comparative progress from previous years. The Director for Adults Services agreed to bring the Principal Social Worker Annual Report to the next meeting of the Panel, along with a covering note listing the changes which would be incorporated in future Principal Social Worker Annual Reports.
- 7 **Transforming Care - Annual Report 2019 (report to follow)**
The item on, Transforming Care Annual Report, was reported as having been deferred.
- 8 **Safer Wolverhampton Partnership Annual Report - Draft**
The Director for Public Health introduced the draft Safer Wolverhampton Partnership Annual Report 2018-2019. He said it was a statutory requirement to produce an Annual Report, which had to reflect the activities of the partnership and how its grant money had been spent. The strategy focussed on three core areas. These were reducing reoffending, reducing victimisation and violence prevention. He described the main highlights of the work the partnership had done in these areas as detailed within the report. The rough sleeper count within the City as of last week was only seven. He was particularly pleased with the work the Partnership had undertaken to reduce the number. There had been a 31% increase in hate crime reporting, which in many ways could be seen as a positive as it was important that the crime did not go unreported. He believed sustained funding was critical to ensuring the success of the partnership.

A Member of the Panel commented that he had visited Glasgow recently in his capacity as the Vice-Chair of the Council's Scrutiny Review Group into Violent Crime.

He agreed that sustained funding was critical to crime prevention work and this was clear from the Glasgow model. Their VRU (Violence Reduction Unit) had drastically decreased violent crime in Glasgow. He asked how effective the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership were at working collectively in the current format. The Director for Public Health responded that he did believe the Partnership were working effectively in relation to its established goals. No one was disengaging from the Partnership which showed that all the organisations felt it was worthwhile to work collectively.

A Member of the Panel commented that multi-agency working at its best was the gold standard. She felt it was important to distinguish between rough sleeping and aggressive begging. She had a general concern about new drugs emerging on the streets which she felt treatment providers struggled to know how best to address. She suggested that there should be more focus on the perpetrators of domestic violence and how best to get them into treatment programmes. The Director for Public Health agreed that it was important to distinguish between aggressive begging and rough sleeping. They would be launching a Substance Misuse Partnership in a few weeks' time, so there could be a collective approach on enforcement, communication, and vulnerability as opposed to just drug treatment. On the matter of domestic violence perpetrators, he agreed that the Public Health Team could do some additional work and provide a briefing back to the Panel at a future meeting.

A Panel Member asked who the intended audience was for the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership Annual Report. She commented that any inward investors considering Wolverhampton would be reviewing the report, to assess whether they wished to invest in the City. She thought the report should highlight more strongly the positives. She said that the report was strong on the qualitative effects but could be enhanced on the quantitative effects of the strategies. More quantitative evidence in the report would show the Partnership were monitoring their goals effectively and would make it easier for the Scrutiny Panel to conduct their role. She suggested that the Partnership should address the question of how they monitored themselves, so the Council could better judge their effectiveness and where there needed to be improvement. The Director for Public Health agreed that data analysis was important, one of its values was it being able to show the disparity that sometimes existed between perception and reality of crime. As an example, he cited that there had been 268 incidences of recorded knife crime last year, where only 6% of the perpetrators were under the age of 25. Whereas 41% of the victims were under the age of 25. This data had helped to challenge the assumption that the majority of knife crime was committed by young people. When assumptions were challenged, it changed your approach as to how to address the problem.

A Member of the Panel commented that they felt it was important to understand how the work of the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership connected with the Council's own Younger People Strategy and the Wolves at Work Initiative. The Director for Public Health responded that they could show at a future meeting how it diagrammatically all linked together.

A Panel Member commented that agreed sustained funding would mean staff were more likely to be committed to the work of the Partnership and would attract high quality staff. They praised the Glasgow model. She commented that ex-offenders were re-settling to the City and asked if some data on this area could be submitted to

the Panel in the future. The Director for Public Health agreed that this could be provided.

A Member of the Panel stated that on the matter of hate crime it would be good to include in a future Annual Report a particular positive case study, which could encourage others to come forward in the future.

A Panel Member asked which areas in Wolverhampton were being targeted in terms of preventative work within Schools. The Director for Public Health responded that it was intelligence led and he could provide the exact information on the areas targeted outside of the meeting.

A Member of the Panel asked about the work being done to help and support the victims of hate crime and domestic abuse, given that the levels of reported crime had increased. They also commented that the voluntary sector should have more of a presence on the board of the Partnership. The Director for Public Health suggested that the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership Action Plan and some supplementary documents could be brought before the Panel at a future meeting, which would show more detail about the steps being taken. He always welcomed suggestions on the membership of the Partnership Board, given the continuing changing tapestry of the City, he would relay this information back and give the Member a response.

Resolved: That the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel endorses, in principle, the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership Annual report 2018-2019.

9 **Appointeeship Charging**

The Director of Adults Services introduced a report on Appointeeship charging. He explained that the item was being considered as pre-decision scrutiny as the report had not yet been received by the Cabinet. The financial challenges in Local Government had meant Officers had been tasked to review non-statutory services, to find ways to generate new income or to stop providing the service all together. Appointeeship was one of the areas identified which the Cabinet had agreed that the Council should explore the prospect of introducing a charge for providing the service. He was acutely aware that the issue would be contentious and that it would affect vulnerable people throughout the City. Members of his team over the last few months had been gathering information on how other Local Authorities managed the Appointeeship service, including the charging rates.

The Head of Community Financial Support stated that the Appointeeship service was offered to people in receipt of social security benefits who were unable to manage their own finances and had not got support from family and friends to appropriately manage their financial affairs. The proposals had the aim of the Appointeeship service working towards becoming a self-financing administrative system. There were a number of reasons that people would be referred under the Care Act Assessment 2014 for the Appointeeship service. An area of growing concern was from people suffering financial abuse from family or friends. Sometimes the family member or friend who had been given Appointeeship status, had been forced to relinquish the Appointeeship status when they had abused their position.

The Head of Community Financial Support commented that the Appointeeship service offered by the Council provided financial sustainability to the users of the

service by maximising benefit claims, providing relevant information to the benefit authorities, paying bills, managing outgoings and budgeting for unforeseen expenditure. Some people had quite substantial savings, an important part of the service was to maximise expenditure appropriately to ensure a greater quality of life and independence. If a person died when the Council was providing an Appointeeship service, the Council were required to find the next of kin and relatives to dispense with the person's estate, sometimes these could be the very people who had abused the person financially, which had led to the original Appointeeship.

The Head of Community Financial Support stated that the proposal was to introduce an Appointeeship charge for individuals who had a balance of more than £1,000 in their account following the deduction of their usual monthly expenditure. The charge would be £5.00 per week for a person living in the community and £3.00 per week for a person living in a care home. The rate was less for a person living in a care home because the administrative processes were simpler. There were currently approximately 200 people in the community who had an Appointeeship with the Council and approximately 300 people in care homes. Out of the 500 people there were currently 27 people who had savings of less than £1,000 and therefore wouldn't be impacted by the proposals. She felt it was an important service to maintain inhouse. Some Councils did contract out the service, which ultimately could cost individuals considerably more than the proposed levels within the report. Some Councils had contracted out the service and had then decided to bring it back inhouse. It was also true that some Councils did not charge for the service currently, but many others did, some of which were at higher rates than those contained in the proposals. She felt the charges proposed were fair and reasonable and would help the Appointeeship service to become financially self-sustaining in the future.

A Member of the Panel asked about the arrangements for neighbouring Local Authorities, Dudley and Sandwell. The Head of Community Financial Support responded that she believed one authority offered the service free of charge currently and the other contracted out the service. She endeavoured to clarify the exact arrangements for each authority for him.

A Member of the Panel asked for more details about how the Appointeeship service managed people's money in practice. The Head of Community Financial Support responded that an income and expenditure statement was undertaken. A pre-paid card was then issued to them, with an appropriate amount of benefit money available to spend on the card for a given length of time. Not all of the benefit money would be on the card as some was used to pay bills such as utility bills. The card acted like a bank card meaning that the individual could use the card to purchase items at shops and to draw out money from cash machines. All individuals in the Appointeeship had the support of a key worker or a social worker. If there was unforeseen additional expenditure, such as a special birthday, the social worker could contact the Appointeeship service and ask for extra money to be placed on the card.

A Member of the Panel asked how the proposed Appointeeship charge would be reviewed in the future. The Head of Community Financial Support responded that there would be a review in twelve months' time if the proposals were supported by Cabinet. There was a yearly review of all fees and charges and so it would fall within the remit for that review in the future. The Council were not able to profit from delivering the Appointeeship service.

A Member of the Panel expressed support for delivering the Appointeeship service inhouse and believed introducing a charge for the service was the correct approach in order for the service to continue. She believed there were benefits from delivering the service inhouse because the people would already be known by the Council's Social Services department.

A Member of the Panel commented that whilst the proposed charges would make many people feel uncomfortable, she believed it was the correct approach. She believed the Appointeeship service could be a great relief to the relatives of vulnerable people who were no longer able to effectively manage their finances. An Appointeeship could lift a heavy burden from relatives having to spend considerable time trying to manage a vulnerable person's finances and would reduce the risk of their money being abused. She believed the service was a good news story and that the Council should consider promoting and brokering the Service. Another Member of the Panel expressed support for this idea. The Head of Community Financial Support responded that it was worth considering and would form part of the Impact review after twelve months, it was however important to remember that the Council could not make an overall profit from the Appointeeship Service.

The meeting closed at 7:40pm.