



# Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 17 September 2019

## Attendance

### Members of the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Simon Bennett (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Val Evans (Chair)  
Cllr Sohail Khan  
Cllr Lynne Moran  
Cllr Anwen Muston

### Employees

David Watts  
Louise Haughton  
Earl Piggott-Smith  
Jennifer Rogers

Director for Adult Services  
Principal Social Worker  
Scrutiny Officer  
Quality and Improvement Advanced  
Practitioner

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## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*      *Title*

**1      Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following:

Cllr John Rowley  
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman  
Cllr Zee Russell  
Cllr Asha Mattu  
Cllr Jas Dehar

Cllr Linda Leach – Cabinet Member for Adults

**2      Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations recorded.

**3      Minutes of previous meeting (11 June 2019)**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4      Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**5 2019 Social Work Health Checks**

Louise Haughton, Principal Social Worker, introduced the report and outlined the reasons for presenting the findings from an annual survey to assess the “health” of the social work workforce. The Principal Social Worker gave a summary of the key findings based on analysis of the responses received to the online survey. The key aim of the work is to improve social work practice by creating a healthy working environment to allow them to do this. The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that the Health Check action plan has been completed and areas for improvement highlighted. The work is expected to be completed before April 2020 and will be reviewed on the quarterly basis.

The panel welcomed the report. The panel requested a breakdown of the profile of people who completed the online survey to evidence that the service is meeting its responsibilities to promote equalities. The panel commented on the importance of different groups being represented and a positive effect that this can have on recruitment.

David Watts, Director of Adult Services, responded that there no breakdown of equalities information on the workforce who completed the survey. Based on current workforce analysis 85% of the adult social care workforce is female, 45% are Black Afro Caribbean and 15% Asian. The service does not have a breakdown of the workforce and how they identify themselves in terms of gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. There is an option to give these details in the survey response but there is no requirement to do so.

The panel queried the level of counselling support given to employees given the nature of the work they do. The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that employees have access to council counselling services and in addition line managers use supervision sessions to help employees deal with difficult situations. The Director of Adult Services advised that analysis of survey findings will look at which responses are contradictory and identify possible areas for further investigation.

The panel discussed if there was a breakdown of the profile of the people accessing services and how representative it was of other groups. The Director of Adult Services added that the service is working to reduce the stigma about employees wanting to declare their sexual orientation. The panel were advised that a Health Summit has been arranged for 7 November 2019 where the issues from the survey will be discussed.

The Principal Social Worker commented on the turnover of employees and the future work planned to look at the people accessing the service to help identify the gaps in provision, affecting underrepresented groups and also it is sensitive to the issues.

The Principal Social Worker commented on the reduction in employee turnover rate since the previous survey and that figure is similar to other local authorities (6% - 8%), which is about 29 people leaving each year.

However, the turnover rates in some adult social work teams are 20%. The reasons for difference in figures vary.

The panel discussed the current caseload of social workers and the possible link to numbers taking up opportunities for training and development. The panel discussed the findings reporting an increase in number of social workers working more 48 hours a week. The Principal Social Worker commented the figure reported is about 6 people and further work will be done to investigate this. The panel were advised the figures are self-reported and would need the permission of the manager to work more than 48 hours a week. The Principal Social Worker commented on professional behaviour which in the past created a culture where working long hours was considered acceptable.

The panel queried the high number of people who either did not answer a question or chose a neutral response and whether this choice should be removed to get a more accurate picture of the “health” of the adult social workers by asking them to express a view.

The Director of Adult Services explained the benefits of keeping a neutral response option available.

The panel welcomed the introduction of the ‘3 Conversations’ initiative but wanted reassurance that the Council would continue to support people who contacting the service to check they are happy with the outcome. The Director of Adult Services explained how feedback from employees involved in ‘3 Conversations’ teams is used to inform and encourage more reflective practice among social workers. The introduction of the initiative has meant that adult workers can see more clients referred to the service, while also building better relationships with clients over time and improving understanding of their needs. A key factor has been more proportionate interventions for clients who do not need a full-scale assessment and can be seen more quickly. The Principal Social Worker outlined the different levels of support on offer to the people needing help.

The Director of Adult Services advised the panel of the adult social enquiries which would have been dealt with in the past by the customer contact centre meant that people did not always get timely advice. The adult service teams will continue to monitor the outcomes where people have been signposted to another service.

The panel discussed the idea of presenting update on progress of the action plan to future meetings for scrutiny. The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that progress reports have been scheduled to be presented to Social Work Development Board and suggested as an alternative would be share updates when available for the panel to consider identify an area of interest.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to note the report.
2. The panel comments to be considered when developing the action plan aimed at improving the health of social work workforce.
3. The Director of Adult Services to share briefings on progress of the action plan for the Adult Social Work Health Check.

## **2019 Adult Social Care Workforce Health Check**

Louise Haughton, Principal Social Worker, introduced the report and outlined the reasons for presenting the findings from an annual survey to assess the “health” of the adult social care work workforce.

The report details agreed actions to address areas identified as needing improvement based on the findings. The Principal Social Work advised the panel as the survey response rate was 43% and it is difficult to draw informed conclusions. The situation is complicated the number of part-time positions in the service.

The information will however be used as a benchmark for next year's survey findings to review progress and areas for development. The panel discussed the number of employees reported as working for 48 hours and the queried the maximum number of hours that could be worked. The panel discussed the implications of staff working long hours and their ability to attend training sessions.

The Principal Social Worker commented on the positive findings from the survey – 72% of responses reported their pride in working for Wolverhampton and 82% reported that they receive regular supervision.

The Principal Social Worker commented on the introduction of the apprenticeship degree for employees wanting to gain a social work qualification.

The panel discussed the opportunity and or willingness for older staff to attend training sessions. The panel were advised that there is mandatory training to attend and there is also the opportunity to attend bespoke training in the programme of courses offered to employees across the service.

The panel discussed the issue of the higher percentage of people when responding who agreed with neither agreed or disagreed option and suggested if this option should be removed. The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that the option on the questionnaire is helpful as it provides useful information and shows that we are not getting things right and that further investigation is needed to understand the reasons behind the view.

The panel discussed the benefits of introducing the '3 conversations' approach into social work practice and supported the decision as it engages employees working in adult social care services.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the findings of the Adults Social Work Health Check 2019 to be considered when reviewing the action plan.
2. The panel support the proposed actions aimed at improving the 'health' of the social work workforce.

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### **Principal Social Worker Annual Report**

Louise Haughton, Principal Social Worker, introduced the annual report 2018-2019 and the main priorities which have been identified for action in 2019-20. The Principal Social Worker outlined the background to the decision following a review of child protection by Professor Munro in 2011 which proposed introducing the role of Designated Principal Social Worker. A key role of the position is to improve communication and understanding between social workers and senior management. The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that they had a successful adults and children's social work conference in the year where the report findings were discussed. The conference discussed a number of topics such as youth violence and forced marriage.

The Principal Social Worker commented that there is a commitment to develop and support new social workers in response to the regional shortage. The Council has a stable workforce and there are plans to have more practice educators rather than students. The plan is to train 36 new social workers this year.

The Principal Social Worker discussed changes made to the draft report in response to previous comments from the panel, for example, showing the progress made and more detailed equalities information. A report detailing the changes will be presented to Cabinet.

The Principal Social Worker reported a significant reduction in the rate of employee turnover in children services workforce. Wolverhampton is now below the national average.

The panel discussed the difficulty in scheduling meeting dates so that panel members can consider the annual report before it is presented to Cabinet. The Director of Adult Services explained that timings could be changed to ensure the panel received the report earlier.

The panel suggested if the focus of the discussion should move to more strategic areas rather than operational matters. The panel suggested the panel in future should scrutinise the impact of the changes detailed in the report on particular groups rather than operational matters. The panel agreed that this themed approach could look at the support given to people with alzheimer's and their carers as the first topic. The Director of Adult Services agreed to take this forward as action.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the positive impact of the work done by Principal Social Worker to raise issues of concern with senior managers and to offer appropriate challenge that can better support employees in front line services. The Director of Adult wanted to formally record the excellent work of the Principal Social Worker and her team in making improvements in children and adult social care services workforce through the 'health' checks work.

The panel welcomed the report and noted the progress made.

Resolved:

1. The Director of Adult Services agreed to review the timetable for presenting the Principal Social Worker Annual so that the panel can comment on the report before it is presented to Cabinet.
2. The Director of Adult Services to present a proposal for the panel to scrutinise the impact of the reported findings in the report on specific groups to the panel meeting on 16.10.19.

- 8      **Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel 2019 20 - Draft Work Programme**  
Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, presented the draft work programme. The draft will be updated to reflect issues discussed during the meeting. The Scrutiny Officer advised the panel that the briefing from Cllr Linda Leach, Cabinet Member Adults has with the agreement of the Chair been deferred to 28 January 2020.

The panel were invited to submit questions in advance for Cllr Jaspal related to the area of community safety. A list of questions will be sent to Cllr Jaspal to present at the panel meeting on 16.10.19.

The panel suggested that the topic of dementia should be added to the panel work programme. The panel were interested in the support offered by the Council to help people to manage the condition. The Director of Adult Services suggested that a visit to meet members of the operational team would be helpful in understanding the range of support offered. The Director of Adult Services agreed to present a briefing on the assessment work done to support individuals and families in these circumstances to the panel meeting on 16 October 2019.

The panel supported this idea.

Resolved:

The panel work programme to be updated to reflect the discussion and actions agreed.

The meeting closed at 19:30