

Fulfilled Adult Lives Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 5 July 2022

Attendance

Members of the Fulfilled Adult Lives Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Qaiser Azeem
Cllr Val Evans (Chair)
Cllr Christopher Haynes
Cllr Stephanie Haynes (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Sohail Khan
Cllr Louise Miles
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Anwen Muston
Cllr Clare Simm
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman

Employees

Meena Dulai
Jennifer Rogers
Becky Wilkinson
Earl Piggott-Smith

Head of Service Adult Improvement
Principal Social Worker
Director of Adult Social Services
Scrutiny Officer

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 members of the panel:

Cllr Olivia Birch
Cllr Rashpal Kaur
- 4 **Declarations of Interest**
There were no declarations of interest recorded.

5 **Minutes of previous meeting (16 March 2022)**

The panel members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2022 as being a correct record.

6 **Update on Health and Social Care Act - Fair Funding**

The Chair invited Becky Wilkinson, Director of Adult Services, to present the report.

The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that the presentation is an update on report presented earlier in the year about Government proposed health and social care reforms. At that time there was a commitment to bring a more detailed update on the plans to a future meeting.

Wolverhampton along with five other authorities were invited by the Department of Health and Social Care to participate in the Adult Social Care Reform Trailblazer. The aim of the plan was to test out how the introduction of the fair cost of care reforms would work in practice. The local authorities involved would share best practice from the implementation of the changes ahead of a national roll out of the scheme. The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that the trailblazer scheme is expected to start in January 2023 and the national rollout is planned for October 2023

The Director of Adult Services outlined the background to the Government's proposals and the key objectives of the reforms, for example, from the plan to introduce a new cap of £86,000 on the amount anyone in England will have to spend on their personal care over their lifetime.

The Director of Adult Services commented that the fair cost level will differ according to the area. There will also be changes to the social care means test for accessing local authority funding. The upper capital limit will increase from £23,250 to £100,000 and the lower capital limit will increase from £14,250 to £20,000.

The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that there will be additional money from government to support the implementation of the reforms as it is expected that the current rate the Council pays for care will increase and the amount that self-funders pay will decrease. The Director of Adult Services commented on the benefits of being part of the trailblazer programme.

The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that in addition to implementing the statutory requirements of the reforms those local authorities involved in the trailblazer would also need to implement specific non-statutory requirements.

The Director of Adult Services gave an update on the progress to date and the assessment of different risks linked to being involved in the trailblazer project. The Director of Adult Services commented on the good progress made to date and the success in recruiting additional social workers and other specialists to better understand the impact of the proposals.

The response from home care providers has been good but there is an issue about engaging some care home providers, especially nursing care home providers.

The Director of Adult Services reassured the panel that work is being done to improve the returns from care home providers and that overall, the work is on track to be completed by the deadline.

The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that work is being done to identify the number of self-funders in the city as the reforms will enable the Council to act as a broker to negotiate their care home fees on their behalf.

The Director of Adult Services commented that a wider risk highlighted in implementing the reforms is the issue of affordability as an initial analysis of returns from provider care homes suggest that the median hourly cost is significantly above the rate currently paid by the Council. The Council is required to produce a market sustainability plan but without having details of the Government grant settlement figure this will be difficult.

The Director of Adult Services highlighted the risks of potential legal challenge from care home residents and to the financial viability of those care homes who have a high proportion of self-funders. A further risk which has been raised with the Department of Health and Social Care is managing the expectations of providers and residents following the publication of a median fair cost of care rate about the future level of fees.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the work being done to mitigate the risks listed but added that some of the risks were outside the direct control of the Council to manage.

The Director of Adult Services outlined the timetable for the project. A proposal on moving forward with the Council's involvement with the trailblazer programme will be presented in November 2022 to the Leader, Cabinet Resources and Executive Team for approval. The Director of Adult Services proposed that a further report on the plans could be presented to the panel in January 2023 before a final decision is made to go live.

The panel were invited to comment on the presentation.

The panel queried the implications of introducing a cap of £86,000 on what someone would have to pay for personal care if they had property and savings above this amount. The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that there is a means test for accessing local authority funding support. There is work being done to develop different financial scenarios to give a guide about impact of the introduction of the personal care cap. The panel welcomed the idea.

Meena Dulai, Head of Service Adult Improvement, advised the panel that the cap of £86,000 is only for personal care needs and the local authority will decide if the care needs are eligible. The Head of Service Adult Improvement commented that in a situation involving a self-funder they can decide what care they will pay for, but if they approaches the local authority for financial support, they would need a financial assessment to decide the level of funding from the Council.

The panel discussed the issue of financial support for accommodation costs.

The panel discussed the workforce challenges facing the care sector and highlighted the need for care to be delivered properly and safely by staff who have been

appropriately trained. The panel asked for more details to be included in the proposals about plans for recruiting people with the skills and expertise needed to deliver the programme.

The panel queried the number of care home providers who have agreed to take part in the trailblazer programme and if there was a minimum number needed for the work to go ahead.

The Director of Adult Services responded that 58 percent of home care providers have responded, based on return rate of 42 per cent and the responses are broadly representative of the sector. However, there is concern about the number of responses from the nursing sector care homes and a request has been made to Department of Health and Social Care for an extension to the deadline. The Director of Adult Services commented that there are some reservations from care providers about sharing all their financial information with the Council, especially around their costings for essential care. The Director of Adult Services added that the response was not unexpected, and reassured the panel that work is being done to contact care providers to encourage them to be part of the programme. This work is being supported by a communication plan.

The panel queried how the level set for median fair cost of care would apply in a situation where people have different care needs and specifically how people this would be factored into the financial assessment. The Director of Adult Services explained that there is work being done to consider different care packages and to develop weighted medians to reflect this difference in care needs. The Head of Adult Improvement added that a consultant has been appointed to undertake this specific work. The Head of Adult Improvement agreed to share a briefing paper on the findings with the panel when the work is completed.

The panel queried the plans for making the public and care home providers aware and updated about the changes.

The Director of Adult Services Care commented on the challenges in advising residents in care, who may lack capacity to make their own decisions and advised the panel of the work being done with Department of Health and Social Care to advise them of the changes. Further work is planned to develop a communications strategy to explain the changes to the wider public.

The panel queried the reference in the presentation to a possible legal challenge arising from the reforms where some services that someone is currently paying for may not be eligible towards the care cap financial assessment.

The Head of Service Adult Improvement commented that the issue is likely to arise for self-funders who can choose the services they want. The Council when doing the assessment under the reforms may not consider the service to be an eligible need, which could lead to the Council getting more complaints and possible legal challenges about this decision.

The panel expressed concern about the practicalities of the proposed changes and highlighted the likely differences in regional care costs and the complexity and challenges in trying to implement the reform plans. The panel commented on the likely beneficiaries from the reforms and there was concern that the change will not

result in achieving greater equality in the way that the policy aims have been presented.

The panel discussed the issue of the low pay and poor working conditions of care home workers and the added financial pressures this group may face. The panel suggested that this issue should also be considered as part of the preparation for the implementation of the care home reforms.

The Director of Adult Services acknowledged the difficulties caused by the introduction of the cap when applied to homes with different valuations, as in some cases the value of the home will be less than the £86,000 personal care cap limit. The reason for being involved in the trailblazer was to share these and other concerns about the possible impact of the reforms onto the Department of Health and Social Care. The Council is waiting for feedback on the issues raised following a visit last week by colleagues from the Department of Health and Social Care.

The panel requested that a copy of the timeline for project plan is shared at the beginning of every month so that progress can be monitored. A meeting of the panel could be arranged if a project task or milestone in the plan is likely to be missed or slipped to understand the reasons for the change.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the presentation to be noted.
2. The Director of Adult Services to share the financial modelling work about how the reforms might affect people with different care needs.
3. The Director of Adult Services to share an update on project plan at the beginning of each month.
4. The panel to consider arranging an extra meeting in January 2023 for pre-decision scrutiny of the final decision about the Council's involvement in the Adult Social Care Reform Trailblazer project.

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Adult Services Transformation Programme

The Chair invited Becky Wilkinson, Director of Adult Services, to present the report on the adult service transformation programme and the services being delivered to the residents of Wolverhampton. The Director of Adult Services outlined the vision for adult services and the key elements of the strategy for achieving it.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the impact of Covid 19 pandemic, and the changes made to the service model over the last few years, for example, embedding the 'three conversations model' into social work practice, taking a more local approach to delivering social care and understanding the needs of different parts of the community, and not simply telling people what they need.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the progress made since the Transforming Adult Services Programme Refresh was launched in January 2021.

The Director of Adult Services outlined the details of the previous transformation programme and the new transformation projects that have been introduced since June 2022. The Director of Adult Services commented on the importance of early help and prevention and supporting communities to provide for themselves. There will be a focus on adopting a more local approach to providing social care and understanding better what different parts of the community want and how to deliver it.

The Director of Adult Services commented that the level of demand for services is heavy on long term support and the probability is that once someone starts getting this level of care it will continue at this level into the future. The panel were reassured that the service is looking at what can be done earlier to prevent people from needing this level of long-term support in the future.

The Director of Adult Services gave further details of the new transformation projects in terms of their aims, expected outcomes, objectives, and progress to date. The work on existing transformation programme will continue as it complements the work being done on the service redesign.

The Director of Adult Services highlighted the challenges of implementing a co-production in the development of a new approach to service redesign, which will involve having conversations with people rather than deciding for them what it is they need. The work on adult co-production approach is still to be scoped.

The Director of Adult Services invited panel members to share their ideas about how to engage with local people. Based on previous experience, the transformation is expected to take up to five years before the full impact will be seen, but there is hope that people will start to see a difference in the service by the end of this year.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report and extended their thanks and congratulations on the progress of the service redesign work.

The panel commented on the overall good progress made to implement projects aimed at delivering the aims of the transformation programme. The panel queried if the Early Help and Prevention project was on track to deliver support to families from October 2022.

The Director of Adult Services confirmed that the project is on track to start in October and progress is being regularly monitored and if there are any expected slippages this will be reported. The Director of Adult Services assured the panel that the service will be open and transparent when there are issues that may affect the delivery of the project.

The panel commented on the scale and complexity of the different transformation projects and highlighted the challenges in engaging with as many stakeholders and in particular families when the work on Adult Co-Production Approach is still to be scoped. The panel commented on the importance of this project in the delivery of the other projects and asked for more details. The panel commented on added challenges faced by people wanting to access their local GP which is the main route to accessing care and support services.

The Director of Adult Services commented that the project Families Front Door is aimed at addressing the issue highlighted and there was an acceptance that people do find it difficult to contact the service due to different options available or knowledge of best number or email to use. The Director of Adult Services added that there is work being done to make the first point of contact much easier and avoid the public having to give the same information several times. The project will help the service to resolve issues much earlier. The Director of Adult Services gave details of the changes to procedures and team structures to support the desired change and to address the concerns highlighted by the panel.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the challenges in how best to engage with different local communities about redesigning services and welcomed ideas from the panel. The plans for public engagement will also include talking to members of the workforce about their experiences and those of their family members about the services, both good and bad. The Director of Adult Services highlighted the importance of involving the public in the design of services and listening to what they think about the current services being offered.

The Director of Adult Services commented that the service is looking at implementing the changes by the end of 2023. Based on the learning from the children's transformation programme it is expected that the full impact of the changes could take up to five years to be seen.

The panel welcomed the comments on the plans for developing the co-production approach but were concerned about the timetable and asked for details.

Meena Dulai, Head of Service Adult Improvement, commented that previous approaches have involved the public at a stage of the process when it had already been scoped, which is not considered to be co-production.

The Head of Service outlined the approach that will be followed and reassured the panel that discussions have started with various organisations about how this can be done in an open and transparent way to ensure the service is properly engaging with people. The Head of Service added that this approach will mean more time is needed when working to develop ideas with local communities as equal partners and to engage with them more effectively.

The panel highlighted the difficulties faced by a resident who is supporting a relative with mental disability or illness in getting access to a GP which is the necessary to getting a proper assessment of their situation by health professionals.

The panel queried the work being done to involve colleagues in NHS in discussions about supporting and implementing the planned service changes.

The Director of Adult Services acknowledged the importance of the contribution of the NHS and the challenges in working with health colleagues because of the impact that delays for people needing medical interventions have on the adult care sector. The Director of Adult Services commented that the issues highlighted are being raised in discussions with health colleagues.

The Head of Service advised the panel that was a meeting earlier with health colleagues to discuss the issue of urgent care.

The Head of Service commented on the challenges in providing 24-hour access to mental health support services under the current arrangements and there are discussions ongoing with health colleagues about how to provide a more seamless service that maximises people's independence.

The panel commented on the previous discussion about the difficulties experienced by residents when trying to access their GP and that the underlying problem was the general lack of GPs and the increasing numbers choosing to either reduce their working hours or to retire from the profession.

The panel commented on the important contribution that the voluntary sector can make in supporting the changes and that partnership working should be encouraged.

The Director of Adult Services acknowledged the important role of the third sector and advised the panel that a community engagement event is planned for next week to talk to representatives about the plans for future service redesign.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the benefits and the value of engaging with the third sector in the redesign of care services.

The panel commented on the key shortage care workers and their role in delivering the aims of the programme.

The Director of Adult Services acknowledged the challenges created by the shortage of care workers. The issue was set out in a report to SEB which commented on the impact of changes to Covid financial support rules. The Director of Adult Services commented on the impact of the challenges facing the sector which is encouraging some care workers to look elsewhere for work which is less stressful.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the importance of recognising and valuing the role of social care workers and looking at improving their working terms and conditions to reduce the risk of them leaving.

The panel asked for feedback on the community event to be shared with panel and that an invitation to attend could be shared with members.

The panel asked to be updated on progress of the implementation of the transformation programme.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the Adult Service Transformation Programme to be noted.
2. The Director of Adult Services to update the panel on progress of implementing the programme and a further report to be presented to a future meeting.

8 Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2021 2022

The Chair invited Jennifer Rogers, Principal Social Worker, to present the report.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that the annual report details the progress report on the work done during 2021- 2022 in promoting and improving the quality of social work practice and the key priorities for 2022-2023.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that the main remit of the work is around the retention of social workers, learning and development and quality assurance policies.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that the report covers both children's and adult's social work.

The Principal Social gave a summary of the key highlights and areas of progress from adult's social work and the work done to support excellence in social work practice.

The Principal Social Worker outlined the key priorities for 2022 – 2023.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that she will be supporting the Adult Service Transformation Programme, focusing on the preparation for Care Quality Commission regulation, and the implementation of the new social care charging reforms.

The Principal Social Worker commented that work is also being done to prepare social workers for the introduction of Liberty Protection Safeguards, which replaces the current Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards scheme.

The panel were invited to ask questions and to comment on the report.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report and commented on the importance of having a benchmark of good practice.

The panel expressed concern about the challenges in providing a quality of service due to the shortage of social workers and other experienced public sector workers which all affect the delivery of adult care services. The panel welcomed the plans for improving the recruitment and retention of social workers and the reduced use of agency workers.

The panel also welcomed the reference in the report to supporting social workers, and monitoring caseloads, and the importance of regular supervision in helping workers to manage work which can be very stressful.

The Principal Social Worker thanked the panel for the comments and the assessment of the challenges facing the service. The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that the adult social care service is not having the same difficulties in recruiting to permanent vacancies, compared to children's services. The Principal Social Worker acknowledged the issues of quality and increasing costs of recruiting agency workers and commented on the benefits of having an experienced peripatetic social work team that can help support social work teams during a period of increased demand. The Principal Social Worker commented on

the importance of keeping people at the centre and listening to their experiences to help shape how services are delivered.

The Principal Social Worker discussed the importance supervision in supporting social workers and adopting a trauma informed practice approach. The Principal Social Worker outlined plans to discuss the issue at the next joint social work conference.

The panel congratulated the Principal Social Worker on the progress and key achievements detailed in the report.

The panel asked for more details about social work practice weeks and the link to supervision sessions and the challenges in covering children's and adult social work services.

The Principal Social Worker commented that the joint role requires the same skills and social work values across both areas of work. The role is supported by a good team but acknowledged the challenges in learning about new processes and different legislative requirement that applies to children's social work, as previous background was in adult social work. The Principal Social Worker commented on the benefits of covering both children's and adults and the opportunities for applying learning and practice from one area to another area.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that there are three social work practice weeks a year which have now been combined with the case file audit work. This provides the opportunity for learning and sharing knowledge among social workers.

The Principal Social Worker commented on the value of case work audits in supporting this process, for example, supporting social workers in their CPD work and social work re-registration. The learning and feedback from the first pilot practice week in May 2022 will be used help improve the next planned practice week in November 2022. The topics for the next session will include safeguarding adult reviews, child safeguarding practice reviews, complaints, and feedback.

The Principal Social Worker outlined the work being done in terms of improving the recruitment and retention of social workers.

The panel agreed to receive feedback on progress on the agreed actions in January 2023.

The panel commented that it would be helpful for the report to include an assessment of progress against actions for the key priorities for Principal Social Work detailed in the report for 2021 – 2022. The Principal Social Worker agreed to include the information in a future annual report.

The panel asked for examples of the Principal Social Worker being able to show a degree of independence in the role and challenge as referenced in the report.

The Principal Social Worker highlighted different examples of critical challenge in meetings with Leadership Teams and in the use of language, specifically the term 'service user' which is not considered to be appropriate. The aim will be to

incorporate these changes in approach into the strategic vision document for the service. The Principal Social Worker commented on the importance of having conversations with people about what matters to them when redesigning services.

The Director of Adult Services gave further examples of how the Principal Social Worker have demonstrated the independence of the role. The Director of Adult Services commented on the positive contribution of the role to the work of the Council.

The panel queried the support available to the Principal Social Worker. The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that there is team that supports her work across the Council and commented on the important contribution they made in the preparation of the annual report.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report and offered their congratulations on the progress and performance of the role as detailed in the annual report.

The agreed to endorse the report recommendations.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the draft Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2021 – 2022 to be noted.
2. The panel endorse the recommendations in the Cabinet report dated 27.7.22.
3. The Principal Social Worker agreed to present an update report to the panel in February 2023 on the progress of plans to further improve the recruitment and retention of social workers.