

Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 15 February 2022

Attendance

Members of the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Qaiser Azeem
Cllr Simon Bennett
Cllr Val Evans (Chair)
Cllr Stephanie Haynes
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Sohail Khan (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Anwen Muston

Members of Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel that attended via Teams

Cllr Olivia Birch
Cllr Rashpal Kaur
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman

In Attendance

Cllr Linda Leach

Cabinet Member for Adults

Employees

Emma Bennett
Sandra Ashton-Jones
Susan Eagle
Rachel King
John Linighan
Earl Piggott-Smith

Executive Director of Families
Head of Mental Health
Commissioning Officer
Head of Vulnerable Children
Learning Disabilities Commissioning Officer
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 and reminded everyone that microphones should be muted and cameras off, unless they have been invited to speak.

3 **Apologies**

No apologies received.

4 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

5 **Minutes of previous meeting (19 October 2021)**

The panel members voted and approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021 as being a correct record.

6 **Mandatory Vaccinations for Social Care Homes - verbal update**

Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families, gave a verbal update on the changes to the Government's mandatory vaccine policy for social care workers. The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that the Government has stated that there will be a consultation on the mandatory vaccinations policy for the extended group of NHS staff and the wider health and social care. As a result, the mandatory vaccination programme which required health and social care staff who either worked in a CQC registered home or would be visiting to be vaccinated has stopped.

The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that employees covered by either the previous legislation or likely to be by any future legislation have been contacted to advise them that the Council is awaiting the outcome of the consultation.

The Executive Director of Families suggested that a further update on the mandatory vaccination policy is presented to a future meeting of the panel at the end of the consultation period.

The panel thanked the presenter for the update.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to receive a further update on the mandatory vaccinations policy at a future meeting.

7 **Supporting our vulnerable adolescents at risk of exploitation**

The Chair invited Sandra Ashton-Jones, Head of Adult Service - Mental Health and Rachel King, Head of Children's Service, to present the report.

The Head of Adult Service advised the panel that the presentation would give an update on the support offered to young people and adults in Wolverhampton who are either at risk of exploitation or who are being exploited and covers individuals or large groups of people. The Head of Adult Service outlined the different forms and situations where exploitation can occur, for example, modern slavery and human trafficking, sexual and criminal exploitation. The term 'exploitation' is defined as a form abuse where someone is forced or coerced into doing things for the benefit of others.

The Head of Children's Service commented on the partnership response to the issue of exploitation and specific actions taken from October 2019 to February 2021.

The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that nationally there had been a focus on familial abuse where harm happens outside the home. In the past the focus of the service was on abuse taking place within families.

The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that a review in October 2019 looked at how partners were working together to address all forms of exploitation. This review led to the introduction of the Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub, which went live in February 2021. The Hub brings together professionals from services that have contact with children and adults either at risk or being exploited to able to share real live time information.

The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that the service provides for the consistent and systematic sharing of relevant and timely information across the whole age range to better understand the issue of risk and threat in the city. The introduction of the Hub has enabled co-ordinated support packages to be offered to address all forms of exploitation through different interventions and for that activity to be disrupted. The Head of Children's Service commented on the links between adults and children's service and highlighted the importance of the additional police resource in supporting the work of the Hub. The Hub also has strong links with colleagues in health and voluntary sectors.

The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that there is a daily morning briefing meeting chaired by the Exploitation Hub Manager with colleagues from the wider partnership. The aim of the briefing is to review all overnight missing episodes of all young people and vulnerable adults and to consider any significant incidents from the police that require some level of response and coordination.

The Head of Children's Service briefed the panel about the work of the Power2 team and outlined the impact and benefits of the initiative. The Head of Children's Services gave details from three case studies and commented on how the intervention from the service has led to a reduction in the risk of exploitation or in criminal activity and an increase in levels of re engagement in education, employment training, improved attendance score and a reduction in missing episodes among the people involved.

The Head of Children's Service commented that there has been a significant increase in the numbers of vulnerable adults and children been identified at risk of exploitation and highlighted the benefits of increased awareness and training across the partnership.

The Head of Adult Service thanked the panel for the opportunity to brief them about the work of the Hub.

The Head of Adult Service advised the panel that the work of the Hub is being seen as best practice locally and nationally as not many authorities are working with adults or people beyond the age of 18 who are at risk of exploitation. The Power2 team operates alongside the Exploitation Hub which became operational in December 2019. The work of the team was initially funded by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and is focused on supporting vulnerable young people up to the age of 25 who are at risk of or who being exploited or where there is a risk of family breakdown or care.

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

The panel thanked the presenters and congratulated the service on getting recognition of the positive work being done in Wolverhampton nationally and by other local authorities of the decision to bring together children's and adults safeguarding services.

The panel queried the size of the reduction in number of missing episodes referred to in the report and the action taken to follow up and share this information with key agencies, where there are concerns about a young person goes missing every few days. The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that there is a statutory duty to talk to children when notified about missing episodes. The Head of Adult Service commented that there are more missing episodes cases recorded as the police are recording them differently than a few years ago. The Head of Adult Service added that the service is managing to reduce and disrupt some missing activity and explained that where children are concerned that the local authority will do a return home interview or at least offer them one. This offer will be in addition to the police wellbeing visit to the young person.

The Head of Adult Service explained that there had been discussions with colleagues where adults have gone missing and the idea of extending the welfare offer when they return home. However, this is not a statutory function.

The Head of Adults Service added that a meeting is planned next week to think about developing protocols for missing adults and explained that there are also several existing national protocols which cover this situation. There are plans to develop local protocols to respond issues involving adults who have gone missing from either from care home or hospital.

The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that if there is a concern about an adult being exploited then a screening tool would be completed which will inform a decision about the need to complete a safeguarding referral form.

The panel queried the process for making referrals to the Hub. The Head of Children's Service advised that the panel that most referrals to the Hub are received from partner agencies such as the police. The Head of Children's Service explained that anyone can make a referral or a self-referral into the Hub and then discussions held, and a co-ordinated response planned.

The panel queried the criteria of the term 'vulnerable adult' and asked for more details. The Head of Adult Service advised the panel that the definition of a vulnerable adult in terms of Adult Safeguarding is someone who has needs for care and support, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or the risk of it. The Head of Adult Service added that the service adopts a more inclusive approach and would consider all the persons circumstances when assessing their level of vulnerability. The service also supports adults who have experienced life trauma which could make them at risk of being exploited or vulnerable to abuse.

The Head of Adult Service advised the panel that when a person has mental capacity the law refers to their right to make unwise decisions and the service would need consent to work with a person.

The service would offer advice and support to a person in this situation which they would be free to accept and provide appropriate information if they do change their mind in future about wanting help. The Head of Adult Service added that the service would try to work with the person to build a relationship which may help to change their mind about accepting support, but without being intrusive.

The panel queried the situation in the case study of the adult moving to a location outside Wolverhampton about the responsibility of the Council to follow up and check on their progress and the arrangements for monitoring the situation. The Head of Adult Service commented that in the case study example the person was referred into the National Referral Mechanism and ongoing support would be provided through this arrangement. The NRM has contracts with several different volunteer organisations to provide support and if a person needed a package of care, then this would be provided as part of the scheme. The Head of Adult Service added that the person's social worker in Wolverhampton would maintain contact and stay involved with the case and provide ongoing care if needed. The Council would be involved in providing care if they needed ongoing health care, in liaison with the Health Trust in the area the person is moving to.

The panel welcomed the setting up of the Hub and highlighted the value of multi-agency services working together to deliver a service and sharing information and the benefits to the public.

The panel discussed the challenge of trying to measure the effectiveness of the impact of multi-disciplinary working, by using case studies referred to in the presentation, and welcomed the decision to invest in offering the range of support through the Hub.

The Head of Adult Service commented that there is an evaluation report which demonstrates the cost avoidance or savings because of the intervention by the Hub. The Head of Adult Service highlighted the cost savings for a young person who previously would have been detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act and may have required an ambulance call out and other support services that would have been involved compared to the cost of providing support by the Hub. The Head of Adult Service added the service can demonstrate the financial benefits of the work done by the Hub and the personal benefits to the individuals.

The panel queried the action that would be taken when a young person who initially refuses the offer of help but contacts the service at a future date needing help. The Head of Children's Service that there will be safeguarding considerations in cases involving children and young people and the service would have a responsibility to continue to be involved and offer support. In addition, there is a self-referral option to the MASH service which anyone can use. The Head of Children's Service added that the service is doing a lot of work is being done to raise awareness with the public about the risks of exploitation. The work is supported by work of West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit who help to co-ordinate and raise awareness across the sector about issues such as 'county lines activities (where gangs transport drugs to towns along 'deal lines')' and the exploitation of young people.

The Head of Children's Service gave further examples of the support service and interventions aimed at helping young people considered to be vulnerable and at risk of exploitation. There are plans for more localised campaigns in know hotspot areas in Wolverhampton on issues such as modern-day slavery and human trafficking.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to note the presentation and the progress of work being done to support vulnerable adults at risk of exploitation.

8 **Care and Support Provider Fee Review 2022 - 2023 and Market Sustainability (report to follow)**

Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families, introduced the report and advised the panel that it was being presented for pre-decision scrutiny before it is presented to Cabinet Resources for consideration and approval of the proposed fee increase.

The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that the Council has a duty to ensure that the care needs of residents in Wolverhampton are met. This work includes reviewing the sufficiency of externally commissioned care fees and if the current fees enable provision of care and for the Council to purchase them and inform an annual review of fees. The annual fee review covers adults externally commissioned care and support service areas and direct payment cost rates.

The Executive Director of Families outlined the scope of the fee review proposals.

The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that the overall increase of £4.1 million in fees will be met from the growth in Adult Services which will include the funds for the proposed fee review.

The Executive Director of Families commented on the implications of major reform of social care and the proposed introduction of a fair cost of care policy. The plans will require the Council to draft several policies by the end of September 2022 as part of the reforms, for example, a market sustainability plan for external care provision and a fair cost of care tool to demonstrate how self-funders costs are aligned to the fees funded by the Council.

The Executive Director of Families briefed the panel about the national picture of the demand for social care provision in Wolverhampton and commented on the increase in demand for social care, particularly during the pandemic. The Executive Director of Families commented that the service has engaged with providers to get their feedback about the proposed fees and highlighted other factors which have also been considered, for example, the national shortage of care staff as well as retention issues and the continued impact of Covid 19.

The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that in response to the national challenges in the home care and domiciliary care sectors and the concerns of providers, care fee rates were increased mid-year in 2021 to maintain sufficiency. The Executive Director advised the panel that a new rate for Direct Payment Self Employed will be introduced in recognition that there are direct payments Personal Assistants who are self-employed and with different costs to those employed and to

the encourage the growth of the sector. A fee proposal includes a recommendation for the rate for people who are self-employed.

The Executive Director of Families commented on the benefits of the change and gave a summary of the recommendations that Cabinet Resources Panel will be asked to approve.

The panel were invited to scrutinise the proposals.

The Chair thanked the presenter for the report.

The panel welcomed the proposal to introduce direct payments for the self-employed and supported the principal of the initiative.

The panel expressed concern about the situation where people would have to consider selling their home to meet their care costs.

The panel commented on the need for consistency in the level of training and care provided and highlighted the importance of self-employed people being properly trained and working to agreed standards. The panel expressed concern about increases in cost of living and inflation which add to the pressure of vulnerable people being able to meet the cost of homecare.

The Executive Director of Families, commented that the issue of quality relates both to the quality of the agencies and the quality of the workforce in terms of their skills, training and qualifications.

The Executive Director of Families reassured the panel that all care homes are inspected by CQC and in addition there is the Quality Assurance Team, part of the commissioning team, who work closely with providers to ensure they are prepared for inspections and offering support when there are concerns about the quality of provision. The team work to maintain a positive working relationship with residential and homecare providers. In addition, intelligence about the quality of care provided by the sector is also informed by complaints or safeguarding concerns reported to the service.

The Executive Director of Families added that future reforms to the health and social care sector will provide further assurance about the quality of provision and the extra responsibilities on local authorities. There is work being done to develop locally agreed quality care standards. The Executive Director of Families offered to present details to a future meeting of the panel about this work. The Executive Director of Families highlighted other examples of other initiatives aimed at improving the quality of care provided and responding to the workforce challenges facing the social care and health sector.

John Linighan, Commissioning Officer, commented on the valuable information picked up by members of the Quality Assurance Team, which was particularly useful during the pandemic, and helped the service to get a better understanding of their issues. The service has worked with providers to resolve issues which has helped to improve the quality of practice and the care given. The Commissioning Officer added that the fee review recognises the impact of increased inflation costs, and the other cost of living increases on the finances of care providers.

The service accepts that these providers are a business and the need for them to have enough profit to reinvest into improving the quality of care.

Sue Eagle, Commissioning Officer, endorsed the concerns highlighted in the previous comments and added that the adult care service has experienced a huge increase in the demand as more people wanted to receive care in their own home. This provision of homecare was already a strategic priority for the service to promote independence for people for as long as possible before the pandemic. The Commissioning Officer commented on the impact of challenges during the pandemic of ensuring people who were medically fit could be discharged home from hospital safely.

Sue Eagle, Commissioning Officer, reassured the panel that the service continues to meet with care providers and quality assurance officers check that they are compliant with their own processes and agreed policies. The CQC also continue to monitor the quality of care provided.

Sue Eagle, Commissioning Officer commented that social workers remain involved when a person is receiving homecare to assess the level of care needed, and that the package of care is appropriate for that person to remain in their own home.

John Linighan, Commissioning Officer, added that the demand for homecare support has been unprecedented and people have been presenting with more complex health and care needs. As a result, care providers have had to be more responsive, particularly during the pandemic.

John Linighan, Commissioning Officer, commented on the importance of having a sustainable care market and the responsibility of the Council to keep to a minimum the number of people waiting for care in their own homes and to support providers to remain responsive to changes in demand.

The panel queried the increase in the demand for homecare during the pandemic and implications of this trend for the future sustainability of the care sector and the costs for residents in care establishments if fewer people than expected consider this option.

The Executive Director of Families commented that there will always be a need for residential care, which may have reduced during the pandemic and changed the way hospital patient discharges are managed. The Executive Director of Families commented that as a result people have wanted to be supported in their own home rather than move to a residential care home, but it is difficult to say how this trend may impact on projections of future demand.

The Executive Director of Families added that the situation will hopefully be clearer after the work being done to prepare a market sustainability statement by the end of September 2022. The document will provide more information about expected future care needs and what will be required from the care sector to respond to this.

Sue Eagle, Commissioning Officer, commented that in terms of demand for care, the situation is being closely monitored and agreed that the pandemic has changed demand for people wanting more homecare.

The service is working closely with colleagues in public health to understand the changes in population which will be included in the market position statement and reviewing the numbers of people going into the different care settings.

John Linighan, Commissioning Officer, supported the view about the reduction in numbers going into residential care compared to pre-pandemic levels and the possible implications of this change on the future sustainability of residential care home sector. The Commissioning Officer added that people are likely to be moving into care much later in life with greater care needs which will have an impact on the costs of care providers as people with higher needs will require staff with better training and investment in services to provide the care and support needed. The Commissioning Officer commented on the mapping work being done to collect the information.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report. The panel requested a draft of the provisional market sustainability plan for external care provision to be shared with the panel in September 2022. The Executive Director of Families agreed to provide the information.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to note the report and support the recommendations detailed in the report.
2. The Executive Director of Families to present a draft of the provisional market sustainability plan for external care provision to a panel meeting in September 2022 for comment.

9 **Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel 2021 - 2022 Draft Work Programme**

The Chair invited Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, to present the report.

The Scrutiny Officer advised the panel about the details of the next agenda for the final panel meeting on 16 March 2022. The panel were invited to comment on the agenda and suggest topics or issues that they would like the reports to cover.

The panel asked for an update on the previous discussion from the police representative and the community safety team on planned work and suggested it would be helpful to get an update on progress. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to follow up the enquiry and update panel members.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to note the report.
2. The Scrutiny Officer to update the panel on progress following the previous discussion on crime and community safety issues.