

Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 16 March 2022

Attendance

Members of the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Qaiser Azeem
Cllr Olivia Birch
Cllr Val Evans (Chair)
Cllr Stephanie Haynes
Cllr Sohail Khan (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Anwen Muston

Members of the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel in attendance via Teams

Cllr Rashpal Kaur
Cllr Simon Bennett
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman

Employees

Jennifer Rogers
Becky Wilkinson

Principal Social Worker (Interim)
Director of Adult Social Services

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 (15 February 2022)**

The panel members voted and approved the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2022 as being a correct record.

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

Becky Wilkinson, Director Adult Services, gave a brief verbal update on a recent change to the Governments mandatory Covid 19 vaccination policy.

The policy required people working in all CQC registered services to be double vaccinated by the end of November 2021.

The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that following a consultation and review of the policy the Government decided to repeal the mandatory vaccination legislation. The change became effective from 15 March 2022 and managers have been advised that no further meetings will be required for people working in CQC registered services who have not been double vaccinated.

The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that service will continue to offer vaccinations to care workers who want to be vaccinated and encourage other workers who have concerns to consider getting vaccinated.

The panel were invited to either ask questions or comment on the update.

The panel thanked the presenter and queried the implications of the policy change for family members who may be concerned that care workers supporting their relatives in care homes are not fully vaccinated and wanted reassurance.

The Director of Adult Services advised the panel that the current vaccination rate in care homes is at 96 per cent and it is estimated that about 100 people are either medically exempt or have chosen to leave the profession. The Director of Adult Services commented that in terms of advice to care homes the Council will continue to provide infection prevention control teams to support them.

The Director of Adult Services reassured the panel that while the requirement for Covid 19 testing will end in March 2022 there will still be a requirement that people visiting a care home to have a negative lateral flow test result before they can enter.

The Director of Adult Services added that should anyone test positive for Covid 19 in a care home then it will be closed for admissions to new residents or visitors while the outbreak is dealt with, the aim is to keep the most vulnerable people as safe as possible.

The panel thanked the presenter and agreed to note the update on the policy.

7 **Adults Social Work and Workforce Health Check 2021**

The Chair invited Jenny Rogers, Principal Social Worker, to present the report. The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that the Council does an annual survey to check on the 'health' of its social workers as part of Adult Service ongoing self-assessment.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel the survey was extended to the wider workforce a few years ago. The survey information gives an insight into social work practice and the general wellbeing of the workforce. The annual health check survey was a key recommendation of the National Social Work Task Force which was set up by the Government.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that the report gives an overview of the main findings from both surveys, highlighting areas of strength, a review of progress made since the previous annual health check report and future actions.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that overall, the survey findings were positive particularly when considering challenges the workforce faced during the pandemic. The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that the survey was sent out between September and November 2021.

The survey response rate was higher than the previous year following the introduction of protected time during briefings or team meetings to allow people time to complete the form. There is further work planned to increase the number of responses to get results which are more representative of the wider workforce.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that an action plan is being developed in a 'you said we did' format to report on progress during the year and to make clear the tangible difference taking part in the survey has made.

The Principal Social Worker gave more details of the main findings from the survey outlined in the report. The panel were invited to comment and or questions about the report.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report and welcomed the positive findings from the survey.

The panel queried the issue of the retention of social workers and frontline adults' workforce within the Council and requested more details about the definition of the term 'manageable workload' referred to in the report and the issues highlighted by the workforce about this issue.

The Principal Social Worker commented on the difficulty in quantifying what a manageable workload is and often the approach has been to quantify it in terms of case numbers and as a guide 25 cases would be manageable, but this would depend on the complexity and mix of the cases. There would also need to be a consideration of the experience and skills of the social worker when considering workload issues.

The Principal Social Worker commented on the importance of social workers having high-quality supervision sessions to give them the opportunity to talk about case workload issues and their other commitments. The Principal Social Worker commented on the importance of offering social workers who may be struggling with their workload different strategies that could help them better manage their caseload and offering wellbeing support where appropriate, while recognising that some social workers may be able to manage a higher number of cases than their colleagues.

The panel queried the work planned to encourage more people to participate in the annual survey and suggested that the inclusion of age profile in the report would provide helpful context to consider the results and see who is taking part.

The Principal Social Worker commented on the further work being done to increase the survey response rates and agreed with the panel about the importance of making the survey findings more representative.

The Principal Social Worker commented that the impact of Covid 19 may have led to survey fatigue and added that work is being done to review the length of the survey, which may encourage more people to take part. The Principal Social Worker commented on other initiatives to encourage more people to complete the survey, for example, the service trialled having some protected time in a social work briefing which worked well last year.

The Principal Social Worker agreed to include an analysis of survey results by age in future reports.

The panel queried the reasons for not using the questions in the national survey in the social work and commented that this would make it difficult to compare local responses to the findings from other local authorities' social work teams.

The Principal Social Worker explained that the pros and cons of using national survey questions in the local survey were considered at the time but on balance it was decided that having more control of the wording of questions meant that they could be adapted to meet local. The Principal Social Worker added that in the past there has been a low uptake on the national survey compared to the locally designed questionnaire and the Council still has access to some of the higher-level comparison data which can be used to inform plans.

The panel queried the chart in the report detailing the number of social workers and other care workers receiving regular supervision showing as less than 100 per cent, as the expectation would be everyone would be having regular supervision sessions.

The Principal Social Worker commented that supervision meetings are normally arranged monthly and is used to talk about wellbeing, learning and work issues. However, there are situations where for different reasons the planned supervision does not take place as scheduled due to a family crisis, sickness and or training date clash which would mean the date being rearranged.

The Principal Social Worker added that sessions may happen every six weeks and reassured the panel that most social workers would have a supervision session every four weeks but may be delayed for the reasons given.

The panel queried the reasons behind the increase from 2016 years in the number of workers receiving regular supervision. The Principal Social Worker was only able to comment on work done since 2019 and explained the increase may have been due to impact of Covid 19 and the switch to virtual meetings which may have helped with the attendance at supervision sessions. The Principle Social Worker commented that the reduction in travelling time due to home working has also helped to give people more time to book supervision sessions.

The panel queried the advantages of delivering training online. The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that social workers are now being offered more opportunities for face-to-face training to replace virtual training events following the relaxation of Covid 19 restrictions. The plan is to offer a mix of virtual and in person training in recognition that some people do not like virtual training. The Principal Social Worker commented on the value of face-to-face training in supporting the learning of social workers and the highlighted future in person events.

The panel expressed concern about the planned redesign of adult care and asked for more details of the scope and focus on the review. The panel also queried the reason for social workers working beyond their contracted hours as detailed in the report, as in the past they would not have been paid in this situation, without the approval of a supervisor or manager.

The Principal Social Worker commented that there is an acceptance that social work is not '9 to 5' job and as part of the role in supporting families there will be the need to work unsociable hours; so the service is as flexible as possible in recognition of this and the need to be responsive to the individual needs of a family. There is also an expectation that managers will encourage social workers to take the time accrued back in recognition of the need to look after their well-being.

Becky Wilkinson, Director of Adult Services, offered reassurance to the panel about the planned redesign of adult social care services and suggested that a report be presented to a future meeting to give more details about the ideas being considered. The Director of Adult Services added that there were no efficiency targets linked to the redesign and is intended to build on current work, for example, the introduction of 'The Three Conversations model' across social work teams. The approach involves creating a new relationship between professionals and people who need support, providing a graded process of conversations aimed at helping people lead independent lives, with traditional support packages offered only when other options have been exhausted.

The redesign will look at the restructuring the service to put the person at the heart of the work being done to support families and strengthening links with the community and voluntary sectors to better understand the needs of different areas of the City.

The Director of Adult Services commented on the implications of future legislation due to be implemented in October 2023 and advised the panel there are several workstreams to engage with social work teams about these plans.

The panel discussed the list of key actions detailed in the report and suggested milestone or expected completion dates could be added to help panel to review progress. The panel requested a progress report on the actions could be presented to a future meeting.

The Director of Adult Services agreed to this request and suggested a progress report could be presented to the panel in September 2022. The panel also requested that a sample of the questions used in the next planned survey to be shared in advance.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report and presentation.

Resolved.

1. The Principal Social Worker to present a progress report on actions detailed in the report, to panel meeting in September 2022.
2. The Principal Social Worker to share a copy of the next survey questions before the start of the survey in September 2022.
3. The Director of Adult Services to update the panel on plans for the redesign of adult social care for discussion to a future meeting.