

ADULTS, CHILDREN AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2021

PRESENT: Councillors Maureen Hunt (Chairman), Christine Bateson, Carole Da Costa, Amy Tisi and Julian Sharpe (Vice-Chairman)

Also in attendance: Councillor Stuart Carroll

Officers: Andy Carswell, Hilary Hall, Michael Murphy, Anna Richards, Danny Gomm, Ged Taylor, Helen Woodland, Vanessa Faulkner, Lynne Lidster and Lin Ferguson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Tony Wilson, Derek Moss, Mark Jervis and Kevin McDaniel. Lin Ferguson would be presenting agenda items on Kevin McDaniel's behalf.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor da Costa declared a personal interest in item 7 as she had been one of the partners involved in the FUEL programme through a charity. Councillor da Costa also declared a personal interest in item 10 as her brother was in receipt of adult social care. She stated she would continue to take part in the item and any vote that took place.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on August 12th 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

ANNUAL COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REPORT

Members were told that three different complaint areas were being considered in this report: adult complaints, statutory children's complaints, and corporate children's complaints. Hilary Hall, Executive Director of Adults, Health and Housing, said there had been one additional complaint in the children's corporate area compared to last year but the number of complaints had reduced in the other two areas. She explained that a lot of changes had been made to the complaints process in adult social care following the Ombudsman public interest report that was considered last year, relating to the timeliness and quality of responses. There had been a particular reduction in the number of complaints relating to adult services, which Hilary Hall said was attributable to issues being resolved at an earlier point before they escalated to a formal complaint. It was noted that three complaints made to the LGO relating to adult services had been upheld. Hilary Hall told the Panel that one of these was the Ombudsman public interest report mentioned earlier. The others related to confusion over charging someone for care as it was unclear whether the Council or service user was paying for their care, and issues relating to a user who lacked mental health capacity. There had been the opportunity to learn from these cases and apply best practice in future.

Members noted that two complaints relating to children's services had been upheld by the LGSCO. Lin Ferguson, Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help, said these related to a child being adopted and the other related to a child's special educational needs. She said a number of the issues relating to children's corporate complaints were due to timeliness of responses, and new processes were being put in place to counter this. Lin Ferguson said a number of complaints were also raised about the accuracy of children's records and care plans, with spelling and grammatical errors being highlighted as an issue. A complaints workshop was taking place the following day as part of the process of providing greater quality

assurance. The Panel was also told that three new managers had been employed by children's services over the past year.

Councillor Sharpe asked if there was anything in the nature of the complaints that caused concern to officers. Lin Ferguson stated there had not been a spike in complaints relating to children's services. The main issues related to improving accuracy of records and timeliness of responses to corporate complaints, which were felt to be important but not a significant concern. Hilary Hall said there were no concerns about the nature of complaints regarding adult services, and those received over the last year had allowed for opportunities for learning and improvement of services.

Responding to a question from Councillor Bateson, Hilary Hall said that if a complaint was received at the end of the year being reviewed then it would be included in that year's statistics, even if the matter was then not concluded until the following year. There was a target of responding to complaints within 20 working days but this was not always possible in cases dealing with particularly complex issues. In such cases timescales would be agreed with the complainant.

It was noted that there had been 36 children's corporate complaints. Vanessa Faulkner, Service Lead HR People Services, explained that statutory complaints related to children in care, looked after children, special guardianship support and post adoption support. Everything else was considered under corporate complaints and as it was a broader field then complaints of this nature were more likely.

Members thanked officers for preparing the report.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Panel noted the report and agreed:

i) That the report is published on the Council's website.

ii) That the annual report continues to be produced and presented at Overview and Scrutiny panels.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICES RECOMMISSIONING

Hilary Hall introduced the item and reminded Members that the contract for drug and alcohol support services was due to end on March 31st 2022. Performance of the current contract had been measured through key performance indicators and a recommissioning process had been taking place. A preferred provider had been identified and this would provide a holistic approach to services rather than a number of individual contracts. Hilary Hall said it was felt this would provide the best value for money to residents.

Councillor da Costa noted from the report that a substantial amount of the current contract's budget was used on a programme where six per cent of users no longer required treatment six months later, and asked if the holistic approach would provide a better outcome. Anna Richards, Consultant in Public Health, said the new service would allow users to have all of their needs met from the first point of contact and allow for better integration of services amongst the key workers administering the support. She gave the example of a key worker in housing being more closely aligned to mental health. The Panel was told that the Royal Borough had a higher than average number of adults who drank more units of alcohol per week than was recommended by the Chief Medical Officer, and the service could help people with their understanding of their alcohol intake and the impact it had on their health. Anna Richards said an app called Lower My Drinking had been introduced as part of this and there had been good engagement.

Councillor Hunt noted that a government grant had helped to provide funding, and asked if this was guaranteed for five years. The Panel was told that the funding was ring fenced for the length of the contract. Responding to a question from Councillor Tisi, Anna Richards said the funding for the proposed new contract was broadly in line with the current one and there would be no significant change.

Councillor da Costa noted that fewer than ten people required residential support, and asked if this was because that was all that was needed or if there were more people needing that support but there wasn't sufficient provision. Anna Richards said this was the number deemed necessary and there was availability to provide residential rehabilitation if required.

Councillor Tisi asked if it was likely there would be a greater takeup in services if it was done online. Anna Richards said there was starting to be a focus on services being provided digitally, but evidence would need to be reviewed to ensure this was appropriate. Councillor Tisi asked if updates could be provided at a future meeting on whether more people were accessing services if they were provided online.

Members thanked officers for the report, saying they liked the holistic approach being taken to the service. Councillor Hunt asked if updates could be given on the progress of the housing issues of some users that were highlighted in the report, and statistics on crime and disorder committed by anyone receiving treatment. This was agreed by Members.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Panel noted the report and recommends that Cabinet agrees to award the Drug and Alcohol Service Contract to the Preferred Provider. Members asked for updates on the progress of those with housing problems, any crime and disorder committed by those receiving treatment, and whether more people accessed services that were being delivered online.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS

Lin Ferguson introduced the item and reminded Members that Achieving for Children had been inspected by Ofsted in January/February 2020, in what was likely to have been one of the last inspections before lockdowns were implemented due to Covid19. Ofsted graded Children's Social Care and Early Help as 'good'. Ofsted had made five key recommendations and an improvement plan had been created as a result. The report being considered by the Panel set out the progress made in terms of meeting those recommendations.

Lin Ferguson said she wanted to highlight where good progress was being made, and where there were some areas that required improvement. Good progress was being made against the recommendation regarding support to care leavers and access to health passports. Ofsted had noted that not all care leavers were being given their health passport – a booklet which gave information about their health and immunisation history – by the time they were 18 years of age. Since the inspection a significant amount of work had been undertaken and the compliance rate was now 100 per cent.

Ofsted had made a recommendation around giving care leavers more of a voice in decision making for their own lives and in service design and delivery. Lin Ferguson said it was accepted this had been an area where more work was required. Since the inspection a dedicated Children in Care and Care Leavers' Service had been implemented with staff assigned specifically to the role. Feedback had been positive as the children involved liked the improved stability of having a team dedicated to their service area and needs, with some young people likening it to a family. The team includes Personal Advisers, who help young people with new skills such as those relating to finance, which equips them to develop their independence skills. There had also been a greater focus on improving Pathway Planning for Care Leavers and the implementation of the Virtual College for those aged 16-18 had led to a large reduction in the number of young people not in further education or training.

The inspection had noted the quality and consistency of recording needed to be improved. Lin Ferguson told Members there was evidence to show that this was an area where improvements had been made since the inspection and highlighted the work that has been undertaken to achieve this improvement. The inspection also highlighted that health colleagues needed to attend Strategy Meetings on a more regular basis. Covid19 had struck immediately after the inspection and health staff had been required to undertake other tasks.

However during quarter four of the report period an upturn in health attendance at Strategy Meetings was noted, although this required further improvement and would be monitored and reviewed at the multi-agency SPA/MASH Board. The consistency of social workers had also been highlighted by Ofsted as an issue. Lin Ferguson told the Panel that this was a national issue, but acknowledged this was one of the greatest challenges facing AfC. If social workers could not be recruited and/or retained there would be a greater reliance on agency workers, who often cost three times as much as a permanent social worker. Lin Ferguson said there were insufficient resources to allow this to continue, and employing agency staff would provide less stability to families requiring a permanent social worker. She reiterated her earlier point that the team providing support to Children in Care and Care Leavers was stable, and the relative lack of stability was in relation to the Support and Safeguarding Service. A three-year workforce strategy was currently being consulted on, which would look at ways of incentivising working for AfC and therefore help to recruit and retain social workers. .

The Panel noted that a target of 70 per cent had been recommended for health attendance at Strategy Meetings. Lin Ferguson said that this was the next milestone, but a 'stretch' target of 95 per cent attendance had been set. She added that attendances had decreased out of necessity due to health staff being seconded to other roles during the pandemic.

Councillor Tisi noted the challenges around recruiting permanent staff to social work positions, and asked how stability had been instilled into the Children in Care and Care Leavers Service. Lin Ferguson said it has always been more challenging to recruit to social work positions in the child protection/court arena as the demands of the role were so challenging and stressful. Lin Ferguson said feedback from social workers indicated they wanted a lesser workload so they could dedicate more time to providing support to the families with whom they worked. It was noted there was a shortfall of 14 permanent social workers in order to get to an optimum caseload and it was hoped the three-year strategy would help, as it would demonstrate to new recruits and staff already in post that AfC were taking the time to invest in their development.

Councillor da Costa asked if there was any possibility of bringing in potential social workers who did not have the necessary qualifications, and put them in a 'learning on the job' scenario in the same way as teachers might. Lin Ferguson said that AfC has been bringing in social workers in their first year in practice (ASYEs) and training them on the job. This has been encouraging so far. She added there had been a national campaign asking those who had left the social care profession to come back, and it was hoped four social workers could be recruited for AfC through this. She also said there was a South East social work fair taking place the following week, which AfC would be represented at for the first time.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: Members noted the report and the progress made to implement the recommendations made by Ofsted in February 2020.

UPDATE ON FUEL PROGRAMME

Lin Ferguson introduced the item and explained that a national holiday activity programme, previously only available to particular local authority areas, was rolled out across all local authorities in 2020. The aim of the programme was to provide food and enrichment activities to children aged 5-16 who were in receipt of free school meals, and should run for six weeks of the year during school holidays. In the Royal Borough the programme had been renamed FUEL by the young people taking part. Lin Ferguson introduced Danny Gomm, Family Hub Manager, who had led the arrangements for the FUEL programme and invited him to explain to Members how the scheme had worked.

Danny Gomm said it was the first time a programme like this had been run in the Royal Borough and at the outset staff had not realised the enormity of the task of making all of the arrangements. However it had been very successful and this had been proven by the positive feedback that had been received. Danny Gomm said he and Chris Caughey had led on delivering the programme. Although a lot of programmes were delivered successfully, even more could have been done had there been more time to prepare. The initial remit had been

to provide activities for four hours a day, four days a week, over four weeks. However the decision was taken to run some activities over all five days of the week and some were extended into a fifth week. Many ended up being fully booked. Providers had to be sought who would be able to provide food for the sessions and Danny Gomm highlighted Windsor Christian Action as being particularly helpful in arranging food provision. He also highlighted that Datchet Parish Council had given free use of the parish hall for FUEL activities. Arrangements also had to be made to transport children to the activity sites, rather than expect them to make their own way there. Staff had assessed where children in receipt of free school meals lived so it could be ascertained which locations would be best suited to host activities, and consideration was also given to the appropriateness of age ranges of activities so families with more than one child wouldn't have their children in different locations. The Panel was told that four sessions were put on for children with special educational needs and three more for children with low self esteem, as this had been identified as a particular need. Danny Gomm said three 17-year-olds had been identified as FUEL providers who would assist with delivering activities after an interview and recruitment process. They had all been extremely helpful and one of them had since expressed a desire to train as a social worker.

The only negative aspect had been some sessions became fully booked but some families then failed to show up, despite reminder phone calls the previous day. Danny Gomm said there had not been any repeat offenders, but one way of trying to prevent it happening in future could be that if families continually failed to turn up after booking an activity they would be told they would not be able to attend any more in future. Other local authorities had a strict 'one strike and you're out' policy to prevent no-shows. Responding to a question from Councillor Hunt, Danny Gomm said schools would be contacted as they could help identify children and families who might want to attend the FUEL sessions but were not in receipt of free school meals, such as pupil premium children and those in care.

Danny Gomm said a government spending review was due to take place to see if funding could be allocated to run the programme again next year. He said staff now had an idea of who the better service providers were, who could assist in setting up any future programmes, and with more prior notice it would be possible to get information out to schools in a more timely manner.

Councillor Bateson said although there were many families who were eligible for the programme, some may not end up taking part as they were too proud to ask. Danny Gomm said one way round this would be families in receipt of free school meals would be given a code when signing up online, which would flag up to the event provider they were a free school meal family without the need for them to be publicly identified or for anything to be said at the event.

Members congratulated Danny Gomm and the team for the successful delivery of the FUEL programme, saying a lot of work had gone into creating it in such a short period of time.

Members noted the contents of the report.

Q1 DATA AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

Members were reminded that the report related to the period April-June 2021. The first part of the report appendix gave performance data relevant to all of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

Hilary Hall highlighted the aspects of the report relevant to adult services. Regarding care package reviews it was noted that this had fallen behind schedule due to an increase in demand for services, particularly for front door services, and this had had an impact on the capacity to meet the target. Reviews had therefore needed to be reprioritised based on need. Reablement was also below target by half a percentage point, often due to the complexities of the cases. Regarding satisfaction levels for adult safeguarding, the Panel was told this was partially due to an error in the way the data had been recorded. Once it had been corrected

the indicator rating had improved. Hilary Hall summarised that the majority of the indicators had an amber rating but said they were within tolerance and there were good reasons why they had such a rating.

Responding to a question from Councillor da Costa, Hilary Hall said there was no additional funding as a specific result of Covid, but there had been funding available to assist with discharges from hospital.

Lin Ferguson spoke to the Panel regarding the key performance indicators relating to children's services. She noted there had been a downturn in the percentage of babies receiving their six week review since the last report, but it was still comfortably within target. Regarding re-referrals to social care, although the figure was within target Lin Ferguson stated this showed that cases may not have been properly resolved the first time around. However it followed a trend across the south east and Lin Ferguson said it could be partially attributable to Covid19, as lockdowns were testing families' resilience and they needed additional support as a result. This would be something that would be closely monitored. The Panel was told there were no current child protection plans lasting for more than two years, and 37 had closed in the last year. It was acknowledged that a plan lasting for more than two years would raise questions over its efficiency. Lin Ferguson said she chaired a 'windows into practice' panel and this would look into any child protection plan ten months or above. It was noted that education health and care plan assessments being completed within the requisite 20 weeks was slightly off target, although Lin Ferguson said this did not represent cause for concern.

Regarding health visits for babies, Lin Ferguson said most families preferred these to be done face to face but the option was still there for them to be done virtually. She said it was important for this option to be made available. Councillor Tisi questioned the effectiveness of a virtual assessment of a newborn baby.

Responding to a question from Councillor da Costa, Lin Ferguson confirmed that a family had the choice of opting out of engaging with healthcare services. However services had to be confident the reasons put forward by the family for disengagement were adequate. Councillor da Costa stated her belief that retaining the option of virtual meetings was important if it helped to encourage families to engage with services.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Panel noted the report and:

- i) Noted the 2021/22 Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel Q1 Data & Performance Report in Appendix A.**
- ii) Requested relevant Cabinet Members, Directors and Heads of Service to maintain focus on improving performance.**

TRANSFORMING ADULT SOCIAL CARE (FRONT DOOR SERVICES AND REABLEMENT)

Michael Murphy, Director of Statutory Services and Deputy DASS, introduced the item and explained to Members that the partnership between Optalis and the Royal Borough had been created to transform people's experience of social care. The intention was to allow service users to lead fulfilling and independent lives, whilst treating them with compassion, respect and dignity. One piece of work relating to this was the transformation of front door services, or what people initially experienced when they contacted adult social care, and reviewing how this could be improved or made more accessible to people. Ged Taylor, Project Manager with Optalis, said the review aimed to ensure people had all the information and support they needed from the first time they accessed any service. There was a range of resources and information available, and the intention was to use these to help people, particularly those with multiple or complex needs, live independently as long as possible.

The first phase of the assessment, which collated service user feedback, had been completed. Specifically customers had been asked if they had received enough information and support,

and if they had received it quickly enough. The feedback showed that for the vast majority of people the service had been good. However there were a significant number of users who had experienced delays. Other users were seeking advice or information that was available elsewhere, and consideration had to be given as to whether there were other avenues for this information to be available from. One proposal had been the creation of an asset database, detailing the support that was available from other organisations. Ged Taylor said this could be a viable solution as more voluntary organisations were reopening again after Covid.

Responding to a question from Councillor Hunt, Ged Taylor said there was a target for phone calls to be answered within 60 seconds. Callers were not put on hold. However if information could be accessed in a different way then this would relieve the pressure on call handlers. Councillor da Costa asked if details of how to access the asset pool database could be available in GP surgeries. Michael Murphy said factsheets about adult social care were available from GPs. Hilary Hall said the asset database was still in the development stage and it was hoped more information could be added to it. Staff were investigating how to create a single point of contact for adult social care, in the same way there was one for children's services.

Helen Woodland, Director of Provider Services, Optalis, said a similar approach was being taken by Reablement services to allow people to lead their lives as independently as possible. Traditional approaches to social care that led to moving people into care homes from a hospital environment usually led to an increase in that person's dependency on another. The Reablement team helped people to return to their homes after treatment and offered support for a six week period. A needs assessment would take place and care package would be approved by parties such as practitioners and rehabilitation assistants.

Helen Woodland explained the Reablement team offered crisis management, out of hours services, and support for complex needs and end of life care. They would work with hospital staff before the point of discharge to ease the transition back into the home environment. The assessments would ensure a person received the appropriate level of support, and not more than was needed. This would include looking at whether technological support would help, and early feedback had shown that some people had benefitted from this. Helen Woodland said people generally needed a lot of support to begin with, and as time progressed some found they were able to live completely independently.

Members noted that three case study examples had been provided in the presentation given in the report. In all cases there was a lot of intensive support at the start of the programme, which helped people to re-learn skills they needed and improve their confidence for independent living.

Responding to a question from Councillor Sharpe, Helen Woodland said the new model would hopefully enable support to be given to more people whilst operating with a reduced level of care requirement. The intention was to operate a short, intensive system of care rather than using long-term crisis care. The Reablement service would also look at those already receiving care and assess if this could be delivered in a different way. As a result service users were showing signs of improved independence and being less reliant on a carer.

Responding to a question from Councillor Tisi, Helen Woodland said the majority of users were near the point of hospital discharge. However it was possible for requests to be made for the Reablement team to see people living in the community.

Councillor da Costa said she wanted to congratulate the adult social care team for this work, stating she knew from her family's personal experience about the excellent care provision now in place.

TASK AND FINISH GROUP - VALUE FOR MONEY OF CARE PACKAGES

Hilary Hall explained to Members that a new task and finish group had been proposed relating to value for money of care packages, which had initially been raised by Councillor Sharpe during the discussions on the Budget earlier in the year. This would be established once the existing task and finish group considering domiciliary care had been completed. Members considered the terms of reference included in the scoping document and agreed to the formation of the new task and finish group.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the terms of reference for the task and finish group be approved.

WORK PROGRAMME

Members asked if an additional meeting could be arranged as the work programme for the next scheduled meeting contained the budget and other substantial items that would take a long time to discuss. Members agreed that despite the length of time it had lasted, this had been a productive meeting.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 9.34 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....