

# ADULTS, CHILDREN AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021

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

Also in attendance: Councillors John Baldwin, Stuart Carroll and Shamsul Shelim, and Mark Jervis

Officers: Andy Carswell, Hilary Hall, Lynne Lidster, Michael Murphy and Kevin McDaniel

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Derek Moss and Tony Wilson.

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr da Costa stated that a close family member of hers was currently using adult services, which she said she was revealing for transparency reasons.

## MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on January 21<sup>st</sup> 2021 be approved as an accurate record.**

## Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chairman said congratulations were in order to everyone who had enabled progress to continue as well as possible in spite of the restrictions that had been caused by Covid19.

Hilary Hall, Director of Adults, Health and Housing, introduced the report relating to adult services and noted there were five performance indicators relevant to the service that had been highlighted. Of these, three had a green indicator. Regarding care package reviews – relating to a particular package's annual review – Hilary Hall said performance was slightly below target due to resources needing to be diverted elsewhere to cope with the demands of Covid. Reviews had been prioritised and all those where it was considered necessary to had been carried out. It was expected that this performance indicator would be on target by the end of the year.

Regarding permanent admissions to care, the Panel was told this was below target but within tolerance as the number of admissions had been higher in Q3. The Panel was told that reablement – allowing people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible – had an amber rating. Hilary Hall said it was just short of target as there had been a dip in Q1, but there had been significant improvements in Q3. Carers' assessments were now meeting target; Hilary Hall reminded members that the Panel was told previously that earlier in the year assessments were not being recorded as formal reviews, but there had been lots of contact with service users. The formal paperwork and reviews had now taken place and caught up with the target. The final indicator related to safeguarding, which was on target.

Responding to questions from Cllr da Costa, Hilary Hall said care package reviews were carried out by social workers from Optalis, rather than the agency or care home associated with the service user. She added that the review also took into account the support provided for the carer. Cllr da Costa asked how quality of care was measured. Hilary Hall said packages would be monitored for complaints and if any safeguarding risks were identified.

Calls were also regularly made to service users and feedback would be taken, and there would be spot checks. Cllr da Costa asked what would happen if a service user wanted to raise a complaint but did not have a family member who could do so on their behalf. Hilary Hall stated a social worker was able to act as a quasi-family member and could ask for an increased number of visits if concerns were raised.

Cllr Tisi asked if any trends had been recognised any areas where a focus of attention may be needed. Hilary Hall said there was nothing definite at the moment, but it may be the case that the indicators themselves may need to be reviewed to get a clearer understanding. It was likely that the impact of long Covid may present the greatest challenge, in terms of how information relating to the cohort that was currently being supported, and future prevention work, would be recorded. Kevin McDaniel, Director of Children's Services, said there had been an increase in demand for front door services following the return to school as new cases were being brought to the attention of children's services later in the development of the situation than might ordinarily be expected. As a result, these tend to be more complex cases which would require being directed straight to child protection. Kevin McDaniel said it was important the right services and arrangements were in place to handle the consequences of this, and the situation was likely to develop further over the coming weeks and months.

Responding to a question from Cllr Sharpe, Hilary Hall said she did not have any areas of concern directly related to adult services. However she said she was concerned at the possible impact on residents' mental health and a possible impact on mental health services as a result. She said there had been an increase in the number of referrals, although this had not been too onerous on mental health services. Cllr Tisi asked if the effects of long Covid might impact on the demographic of people needing care. Hilary Hall said she believed this would be the case, although there had not been any evidence of it so far.

Hilary Hall said a carer's assessment would also take into account the needs of the person providing the care and seeing what support was appropriate to give them, such as respite or support in the home. There had been an increase in the number of people providing support to someone in their own home. Anyone could make a referral for a carer's assessment.

Kevin McDaniel introduced the report relating to children's services and told the Panel that the six performance indicators all had a green rating. The Panel was reminded that a task and finish group had looked at the virtual college's work with care leavers, and work was taking place to encourage businesses to consider employing care leavers as the Covid pandemic had led to a lack of jobs for them. There had been an improvement in the performance indicator for health visitor assessments, as families had been more engaged using a virtual communication system while their children were not accessing as many face to face services.

Regarding graded Ofsted inspections of schools, Kevin McDaniel said none had been carried out since March 2020 and it was expected that none would be done before September 2021. Four schools had been visited but not as part of an assessment that would result in a formal grading; however the feedback from these had been positive in terms of supporting the school's most vulnerable children and remote learning. An Ofsted inspector had been seconded to RBWM to help share best practice during the first national lockdown period.

The Panel was told there had been a reduction in the number of families that had been re-referred to social care within 12 months of their original care ending. Kevin McDaniel said the early help service had been able to provide more targeted one to one work, and there had been improved consideration of how services would follow up with families. He added the number of families involved was relatively small. Regarding children whose children protection plan lasted for more than two years, Kevin McDaniel said he was pleased the number was currently zero and work was taking place to ensure there was no drift in cases to maintain this level of performance.

In relation to special educational needs and disability, Kevin McDaniel said the focus of the work was to ensure Education Health and Care Plans were of a high quality. There had been

an increase in the number of requests for an EHCP and it was possible this service may come under some stress. Cllr Tisi noted many children were not eligible for an EHCP and asked how the impact on these children was measured. Kevin McDaniel said that if a child had an identified educational need, the school would implement a localised plan for that individual as a recognised “SEN K” child. The education psychology service was available worked once a year with schools to support planning for such children, which in turn helped to share best practice amongst schools.

Cllr Tisi asked if the improvement in the number of care leavers now in education or employment could be attributable to the virtual college. Kevin McDaniel agreed this was a factor, along with the timing of the report as it came after schools had finishing for the year.

Regarding referrals to children’s social care, Kevin McDaniel explained that there was a system anomaly which was being reviewed to ensure the data was consistent.

Cllr da Costa said she and Cllr Tisi had both been impressed with the new officer at the virtual college and the statistics they had produced. She noted there were no child protection plans lasting for more than two years and asked for more information. Kevin McDaniel said child services would work with a family to eliminate any identified risk; if this did not work then alternatives would be considered and discussed with the family. A child protection plan was intended to last for a short time only rather than the entirety of a child’s life, and a child protection plan should make a sustainable difference to that child.

Cllr Sharpe asked how the impact of Covid on schools was being measured and recorded. Kevin McDaniel said there would be an annual report on what was and wasn’t working, which was due to be published in early 2022. It was noted that many children were excited and enthusiastic to be returning to school, and many vulnerable children had achieved well during the course of the pandemic. Kevin McDaniel said Sir Kevan Collins had been appointed by the government to lead a steering group scrutinising how learning would be restored in schools.

Hilary Hall told the Panel there were three performance indicators relating to public health, including successful completion of substance misuse programmes. These were all on target to be met. Hilary Hall said virtual consultations had been introduced because of the pandemic, but this had improved engagement and service users had been more committed to completing their programme. This contract was due to be recommissioned from April 1 2022. Cllr Sharpe suggested some residents may suffer increased stress or anxiety as a result of Covid and turn to drink or drugs as a coping strategy. Hilary Hall said there was no specific evidence to suggest this, but there would be a clearer picture over time and it was something that was being taken into consideration. Cllr Carroll said there had been a good performance in terms of resilience for services and it was hoped this would continue to evolve. He said this would be incorporated into the Council’s homelessness and mental health strategies.

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

- i) Noted the 2020/21 Adults, Children and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel Q3 Performance Report in Appendix A.**
- ii) Requested relevant Lead Members, Directors and Heads of Service to maintain focus on improving performance.**

## JOINT HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

Hilary Hall advised the Panel that the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy had been formally signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board two days previously, and that this was a statutory requirement. The strategy had been developed with input from the Frimley Integrated Care Strategy. Previously the RBWM strategy had had 12 objectives but as these were wide-ranging and difficult to track they had been replaced by four key priorities. There was now less of a focus on delivering new services; instead new ways of joining up strategies and maximising what was already in place were being prioritised, although there was still scope for new services to be introduced if needed.

Cllr Sharpe said the new strategy was very ambitious and the right sort of thing to aim for; however he asked how this strategy differed from the previous one and what would happen if the targets were not achievable. Hilary Hall said the previous 12 objectives had all related to operational matters, whereas the new priorities would provide a clearer focus on the work that was actually taking place. Hilary Hall and Kevin McDaniel both said the targets were aspirational and long-term, and could take several years to become fully embedded. Following a question from Cllr Bateson, Hilary Hall confirmed neighbouring councils and health colleagues had been consulted prior to the strategy being agreed.

Cllr da Costa said she was pleased the strategy was so long-term, as often plans would only be implemented for a four-term period in between elections. Following a request from the Chairman, it was agreed Cllr Carroll would take forward to Cabinet that the strategy's long-term focus would be to 2025 and beyond.

It was noted that the term 'high level actions' mentioned at 2.5 of the main report should not have been included and should say 'detailed delivery plans' instead.

Cllr Tisi noted that domestic abuse had been listed as an area of challenge that needed combatting, and asked if this had been identified as a particular issue. Hilary Hall said there had been a recent increase and lockdowns caused by Covid had exacerbated the issue; however it had been included as it impacted on children's and adult services and it was felt it would be wrong not to include it. Kevin McDaniel said examples of domestic abuse included controlling and/or coercive behaviour, and not just physical violence. Cllr Carroll said it was important people were able to spot the signs of domestic abuse, and the Council would work with the police to bring perpetrators to account.

Cllr Carroll said the strategy and the new performance priorities would enable the Health and Wellbeing Board to measure its progress. He said he would be working with Cllr Stimson as part of her role with climate change and sustainability, as the right environment would lead to improved outcomes for all.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Panel noted the report and noted the new Joint Health and Wellbeing/Place Strategy 2021-2025.**

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the contents of the Annual Report be approved and passed for consideration at Full Council.**

## WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22

The Chairman reminded the Panel that all members had been asked to contribute suggestions for the work programme, and many of these had been scheduled for dates for the forthcoming year following discussions with officers. She expressed thanks to officers for their help in developing the work programme.

The Chairman said a report regarding youth groups – outlining which groups there were and how they helped young people and contributed to the Council – had been proposed but no date had been set for it. She also suggested a task and finish group looking at the recommissioning of domiciliary care services. The Chairman noted from the minutes of the last meeting that Cllr Sharpe had remarked that although value for money needed to be taken into consideration when creating care packages, this should not be to the detriment of the level of care provided and the focus should be on providing the appropriate level of care. She suggested a task and finish group could review this, and this suggestion was agreed by members.

Cllr Tisi suggested the item on youth groups could be considered outside of the Panel via email. Cllr Hunt said she felt it would not be possible to scrutinise decisions if members were not aware of all of the groups and what they did. Kevin McDaniel said youth services were in the process of being restructured as part of the family hubs work and notional budgets would be defined as a result. This would be sent to members as soon as possible for discussion in its own right. Cllr da Costa said the family hub strategy was being implemented and suggested a review could be included as an agenda item for the meeting in April 2022.

The meeting, which began at 6.15 pm, finished at 7.35 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....