

Caring Sub-committee

Thursday, 15 June 2023

Present: Councillor J Shaw (Chair)
Councillors M Fox, L Arkley, G Bell, J Cruddas,
A Holdsworth, L Marshall, P McIntyre, M Murphy,
T Neira and T Mulvenna

In attendance:
Councillor Janet Hunter, Cabinet Member

Apologies: Councillors T Hallway and J Kirwin

C1/23 Appointment of Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's Constitution, the appointment of the following substitute members was reported:

Cllr T Mulvenna for Cllr T Hallway

C2/23 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations.

C3/23 Adult Social Care – Overview and Strategic Priorities

The sub-committee received a presentation which set out an overview of the adult social care service area and the strategic priorities for 2023/24.

The service area covers a wide range of services for adults, including the Adults Gateway, Care Point and Integrated Care Services, Community Wellbeing and Assessment Teams, Whole Life Disability, Adult Mental Health Services, Emergency Duty Team, Business Assurance and Adults Finance.

The Sub-committee was informed that the service priorities for 2023/24 are

focussed on the following eight areas:

- Service improvement and development
- Workforce development and support – including recruitment and retention
- Carer support
- Feedback and participation from people with lived experience
- Access to information and choice
- Collaboration and equality
- Improving ASC leadership and processes – including the development of a medium term strategy for Adult Social Care
- CQC inspection readiness

The presentation also set out some of the current pressures and risks in Adult Social Care. These included:

- Increasing demand – including demand from hospital discharges, new high cost complex clients moving from children’s services to adults, and increasing poverty and mental health needs;
- Workforce issues - recruitment and retention remains a significant issue leading to higher caseloads for staff and competition for social workers and occupational therapists;
- Issues in the Care Market – including the availability and cost of care provision, availability of home care services due to staffing capacity, and inflation cost pressures for providers;
- on-going work to prepare for future risks - understanding the budget position for 2023/24, managing the care market, including market sustainability plans and fee negotiations, and changes to legislation and mental health reforms.

It was noted that the service was also preparing for an inspection from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which is expected in the Autumn. This includes taking forward actions following a recent positive peer review challenge.

Members thanked officers for the presentation and noted the comprehensive plan covering a wide range of areas.

In relation to capacity, it was noted that the priority areas are linked to a strategic plan with clear milestones and actions allocated to each Assistant Director across the service area. Service leads are also working closely with other service areas across the Council on cross cutting issues, such as working with the People Team on recruitment and retention.

There was some discussion about workforce issues and it was noted that there are concerns, both within the Council, and in the adult social care sector more widely, in relation to an ageing workforce, with many staff over the age of 55. It was explained that a range of action is being to address this including a review of career pathways and the development of the Care Academy. In addition, the Council has been looking to recruit retired experienced social workers and occupational therapists in roles to help with the training and mentoring of newly qualified staff.

The Sub-committee noted the focus on increasing the take up of direct payments and highlighted the impact this could have on the small team which supports direct payments. It was noted that a review of the direct payments service was currently under way and actions will feed into improvements to the advice and information available to support take up.

There was some discussion about the Care Academy and its aim to provide care courses and training, as well as information about vacancies within the Council and the private sector. It was noted that there are plans in place to recruit a co-ordinator to further develop the Care Academy. It was also noted that the Council is working closely with the independent care sector in relation to the Care Academy, with the Care Academy funded by the Council, but with the aim of supporting the wider care system, both internally and across the independent sector, for the benefit of residents in North Tyneside.

C4/23 Introduction to Scrutiny and Work Programme Report

The Sub-committee considered the report which set out a proposed approach to work planning for the Caring Sub-committee for 2023-24, together with background information to help the Sub-committee consider and decide on its

outline work programme for 2023-24.

The Sub-committee considered the suggested topics set out in Appendix C to the report which had been identified by Cabinet Members and lead Senior Leadership Team officers.

Members identified the following areas as policy topics they would like to prioritise for the work programme:

- Recruitment and retention of social workers in Adult Social Care and risks and actions in relation to high case loads
- Recruitment and retention across the care sector
- Direct Payments – opportunities and potential risks
- Support for Carers and Carers' health and wellbeing needs
- Use of technology to support care
- Hospital discharge and re-ablement
- Breast Screening and how to address the lower rates of take-up in North Tyneside
- National Suicide Prevention Strategy and local implications
- Drug and Alcohol Residential Rehab Pathway (could be linked with item on suicide prevention)

The Sub-committee agreed:

- that the above priorities would provide an outline work programme for the year ahead.
- that the work programme will be included as a standard agenda item at each future meeting of the Sub-committee.