

## Caring Sub-committee

**Tuesday, 28 November 2023**

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

In attendance:  
Councillors

### **C18/23 Appointment of Substitute Members**

There were no substitute members.

### **C19/23 Declarations of Interest or Dispensations**

Councillor Jane Shaw declared a registerable personal interest as a Governor of CNTW Trust.

Councillor G Bell declared a personal interest in item 5 as his wife is a personal assistant.

Councillor L Bones declared a personal interest in item 7 as a family member receives home care.

### **C20/23 Minutes**

It was noted that page 6 of the minutes would be corrected to say Claire Easton.

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

### **C21/23 Direct Payments**

The Sub-committee considered the report which set out the Council's updated policy in relation to Direct Payments. It was noted that the policy was aimed at helping people to commission their own care and to provide support in relation to managing the role as an employer, including contractual and financial aspects.

The Council is looking to improve access to Direct Payments and increase uptake through a range of measures, including promoting information about Direct Payments and making information and guidance easier to access. They are also looking at ways of supporting personal assistants through the Care Academy.

Members asked about the resources available within the finance and audit team to support those taking up Direct Payments. It was noted that capacity had been increased within the financial assessment team and this included audit to ensure that money is being used for the right reason and to meet eligible needs.

Councillors highlighted that they experienced a disparity between some families who are using Direct Payments and others who don't know about it. It was suggested that more needs to be done to make people aware that they could opt for Direct Payments. This was particularly highlighted in relation to young people with learning support needs when they transition to adult services.

It was noted that the Council are looking to raise awareness around the option of Direct Payments and this includes training for staff.

Some members highlighted that the Direct Payment option can be a daunting prospect for many people who may be put off by the need to become an employer and complexities around this. Members asked if there had been any feedback on this, and what support is available to encourage people to take up this option.

It was noted that this was a national issue and is an acknowledged problem. The Council is looking at what could be done differently to encourage take up.

A councillor raised an issue about safeguarding for both the person in receipt of Direct Payments as an employer and also for those employed as personal assistants. It was noted that safeguarding is part of the process. But Direct Payments is also useful for some people who may want to do something more flexible eg gym membership or to fund a different day centre. In these

circumstances Direct Payments can give people more flexibility and choice and can promote independence.

It was also noted that the Direct Payments team as well as external organisations can provide advice and support to Personal assistants. In addition, Disability North contracted by the Council to provide training and support, including to Personal Assistants.

Members asked what proportion of service users currently use Direct Payments. Officers said they would be able to provide current information on this, but it was around 20-25% of users.

It was noted that Direct Payments does not cost the Council more to administer as the personal budget is based on the financial assessment and the same financial team supports all customers so there isn't an additional cost.

It was noted that the current pressures in social care in relation to employment of carers also impacted on the availability of personal assistants, and these issues impacted across the whole care sector. It was noted that the Care Academy was part of the support in place to incentivise people to move into care.

The Sub-Committee thanked officers for the informative report.

## **C22/23      Stopping the Start: A Smoke Free Generation**

The Sub-committee considered the report which provided a briefing on the national plan 'Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation'

and the supporting consultation 'Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping'.

The Sub-committee noted the four key strands of the strategy:

- Changes to the age of sale which will make it illegal to sell tobacco to anyone born after January 2009, effectively raising the age of sale each year;
- Support for smokers to quit by increasing funding for stop smoking services and increased spending on anti-smoking campaigns;
- Support for enforcement with additional funding for agencies such as Trading Standards, border Force and HRMC and new powers for local authorities to issue on the spot fines to enforce the age of sale legislation;
- Protecting children from vaping by taking action to tackle the rising rates in youth vaping. This could include restricting vape flavours, regulating vape packaging and product presentation, regulating point of sale displays, exploring further restrictions for non-nicotine vapes and other nicotine consumer products such as nicotine pouches, and action on affordability of vapes.

It was noted that the current consultation is open until 6 December and the report recommends that the Sub-committee submit a response to the consultation using the endorsed responses from Fresh North East that are attached to the report.

Members asked whether there was anything else the Council could be doing in the meantime to reduce youth vaping, such as public health interventions being built into the Local Plan.

Officers advised that the Council had been working with schools and with Fresh North-East and providing guidance to schools on vaping control. Public health officers had spent time with PHSE teachers to discuss how to promote messages about the harms of vaping and promoting a consistent approach.

More widely, the Council is also addressing concerns around recycling and the

environmental impact of disposable vapes and also using the enforcement role of Trading Standards in relation to retail sales and criminal gangs. The Local Plan would not really be a route for enforcement action. However, any increased funds for Trading Standards would be welcome.

There was some discussion about the sale of vapes and how this had proliferated across a wide range of retailers. It was noted that some of the proposals in the consultation aimed to address this.

It was noted that the proposed changes set out in the plan were aimed at protecting young people, but there is likely to be significant resistance from the well-resourced tobacco industry. The Director of Public Health highlighted that this is a substance that is detrimental to health and is addictive and protections for young people need to be in place. It was noted that a similar approach to raising the age of sale had recently been dropped by the New Zealand Government and it was acknowledged that there are likely to be difficulties in passing the legislation into law.

It was agreed:

- that a response to the consultation should be submitted on behalf of the Caring Sub-committee using the suggested responses set out in the report.
- That Councillors may also wish to submit their own response to the consultation as an individual.

## **C23/23      Adult Social Care Dashboard**

The Sub-committee was presented with a dashboard setting out the current position in relation to Homecare in North Tyneside.

It was noted that the position in relation to the brokerage list had seen a dramatic improvement in recent weeks, with only 13 clients currently on the brokerage list waiting a package of care.

The Sub-committee also noted the current position in relation to care home

inspections and that there were now only five care homes within the requiring improvement category.

Members asked for the dashboard to be either circulated in colour in future or for the information to be displayed on the screen during the discussion and it was agreed that this would be taken forward.

## **C24/23      Work Programme 2023-24**

The Sub-committee considered the work programme going forward into future meetings.

It was noted that the following items were planned:

- 24 January 2024:

To receive a report on Multiple and Complex Needs including Adult Mental Health Care.

It was suggested that the ICB and CNTW would be invited to attend for this meeting to provide a fuller picture.

The Sub-committee identified the following areas to be covered:

- Community mental health transformation – primary and secondary health care
- Safe Haven and the crisis café (ICB)
- Residential Rehab – Oswin Road
- Section 117 – deprivation of liberty safeguards
- Co-occurring mental health and drug and alcohol issues
- The role of Adult Social Care and the role of partners

- 28 March 2024:

To receive a report on Suicide Prevention.

It was suggested that the organisations if U Care Share and Bereaved by Suicide be invited to this meeting.

Councillor Shaw also circulated a questionnaire that she had drawn up as a useful tool for members when reading papers and for in preparing for the discussion of reports.