

Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee

Thursday, 4 November 2021

Present: Councillor J Kirwin (Chair)
Councillors J Montague, J Allan, T Brady, M Hall,
P McIntyre, T Mulvenna, P Richardson, J Shaw and
L Bones

In attendance:
Councillors A McMullen

Apologies: Councillors L Arkley and J Cassidy

ASCH25/21 Appointment of Substitute Members

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

Cllr L Bones for Cllr L Arkley

ASCH26/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

ASCH27/21 Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

ASCH28/21 Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report

The Sub-committee considered the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) Annual Report 2021-21.

It was noted that the report was the annual report of the joint Northumberland and North Tyneside Safeguarding Board for the period April 2020- March 2021. It was also noted that the report covered a very challenging period for the Board and partner agencies due to the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the Board acting quickly to put new arrangements in place to manage new risks and demands.

The Sub-committee was advised that, despite the impact of Covid-19, the Board has delivered on a number of its promises. The following were highlighted in the report:

- Contribution to a national project about how to safeguard vulnerable drinkers with the development and delivery of multi-agency workshops
- Developed and monitored a comprehensive and robust SAB Risk Register to identify and monitor Covid related risks and themes.

- Completed and published a Safeguarding Adults Review – Leigh
- Launched virtual multi agency training across the partnership including criminal and sexual exploitation
- Shared information with the public to promote awareness about safeguarding and domestic abuse
- Worked in conjunction with the police on Operation Momentum
- Reviewed independently the joint SAB arrangements

The Sub-committee noted that the intention going forward was to separate the Board into two boards covering Northumberland and North Tyneside, while maintaining joint sub-groups. This was reported in more detail to the last meeting of the Sub-committee.

A member asked a question about the impact on data sharing of having different computer systems across different local authorities, and whether this was detrimental to the service provided. It was noted that it would be impractical to try to have the same computer system across all local authorities and partner agencies, and instead the focus was improving information sharing across partners and flagging any issues that arise and need to be addressed.

Members commended officers on the work of the Board during the pandemic and asked about impacts in terms of backlogs or priority areas that had been unable to be progressed. It was noted that the Board had taken a risk-based approach to prioritise action and there had been some efficiencies achieved through this approach. In particular, it was highlighted that there had been increased participation in Board meetings as a result of the move to on-line meetings. However, the work has been relentless on staff who are now feeling the effects through burn-out and tiredness. Although safeguarding has been prioritised, some lesser priority cases may have seen delays and longer waits.

There was some discussion about the work undertaken around treatment resistant dependent drinkers. It was noted that some of the education work around this had been targeted at professionals and focussed on issues around legal powers in the context of varied capacity. It was agreed that a briefing on this work would be circulated to members for information.

There was some discussion about the role of carers in identifying any safeguarding issues. It was noted that providers would be responsible for ensuring that carers are trained in safeguarding issues and providers are monitored in relation to this. It was also noted that during the pandemic it had been more difficult for professionals to undertake visits, but there had been an increase in whistleblowing reports from care staff.

There was some discussion about differences between Northumberland and North Tyneside in relation to the data that was included in the report. It was noted that it was difficult to compare data across the two areas as different authorities use different definitions and work in different ways. The Board had agreed that the data was not comparable across the two authorities.

The Chair welcomed the report and thanked the officer for the presentation.

Agreed:

To circulate briefing information on the Safeguarding Vulnerable Dependent Drinkers Project.

ASCH29/21 Covid-19 Update: Public Health and Adult Social Care

The Sub-committee received an update on the current Covid 19 data covering public health and adult social care.

It was noted that at the current time the covid rate in North Tyneside is the highest in England and is an outlier in the North East, with the high rate being driven by positive cases in under 14 year olds. However, rates have declined since the beginning of half term. It was also noted that, although NHS COVID-19 activity has increased, the significant demands on health services are from non-COVID-19 activity. Death rates from Covid remain low.

There were some questions raised about whether people in the borough were continuing to self-isolate when testing positive for Covid in the light of recent media coverage suggesting reduced levels of compliance. It was noted that there is no evidence to suggest this is the case and that on the whole people know to do the right thing.

There was some discussion about the current list of symptoms and whether these tend to be different in teenagers. It was noted that this can be the case but the symptom list was based on the best scientific evidence. It was noted that transmission tended to be high within households.

It was noted that some additional measures have been recommended to schools in the borough which have been welcomed by headteachers. These include recommendations that staff wear face coverings in communal areas and face coverings for secondary children in communal areas and classrooms, as well as encouraging vaccine take up and the continuation of infection control measures in schools.

There was some discussion about vaccine take up in the borough which remains high. Cllr T Mulvenna asked if he could be provided with information on adult vaccine rates for Valley Ward.

In relation to Adult Social Care, it was noted that there are currently 4 care homes in outbreak, but most residents are asymptomatic having been double vaccinated and had booster vaccines.

It was noted that vacancy rates in care homes had been coming down toward pre-pandemic levels with an increase in self-funded residents opting to go into care homes. It was noted that additional short-term beds had been made available to support hospital discharge and home care capacity issues.

Members asked for additional information to be circulated on the grants per bed basis made available by the government during the pandemic.

There was some discussion about the uptake of flu vaccines. It was noted that take-up among care staff had been higher than past years and that NHS and infection control staff continue to promote uptake.

Agreed:

- To provide information on vaccine uptake in Valley Ward to Cllr Mulvenna;

- To circulate information on grants (per bed) made available by the government during the pandemic.

ASCH30/21 Specialist Drug and Alcohol Services

The Sub-committee received an in-depth presentation on specialist drug and alcohol services in the borough.

The presentation set out background information on substance misuse/abuse and harmful alcohol consumption and the overall costs to the individual and society. The presentation also set out the responsibilities of the local authority, the policy context, the level of need for services in North Tyneside, specialist service provision in the Borough, and the impact of Covid on service delivery.

It was noted that nationally drug related deaths have reached an all-time high and the north east continues to have the highest rate of deaths relating to drug misuse at around twice the England average and three times the value for London. The north east is also an outlier for alcohol related deaths.

It was noted that it was difficult to assess the level of unmet need for drug and alcohol services as assessments are based on modelling and people do not always disclose information.

In relation to Covid it was noted that there had been a commitment to keep drug and alcohol services open throughout, and there has been an increase in the numbers attending for treatment, as well as an increase in the number of referrals into services. It was noted that there had been a need to move many services on-line, but this had been beneficial to some clients who had found they preferred to access services in this way.

The Chair thanked officers for the informative presentation. Due to time constraints, there wasn't an opportunity to raise questions, but it was agreed that Members could email any questions through to officers after the meeting if they wished.

ASCH31/21 Update from the recent meeting of the Joint Regional Health Scrutiny Committee

It was agreed that the minutes from the meeting would be circulated to members of the Sub-committee once available.