

# **Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee**

**Thursday, 11 February 2021**

Present: Councillor K Clark (Chair)  
Councillors T Brady, J Cassidy, M Green, J Kirwin,  
N Huscroft, C Davis, A Percy, P Richardson and  
M Thirlaway

In attendance:  
Councillors M Hall

Apologies: Councillors T Mulvenna

## **ASCH1/19 Appointment of Substitute Members**

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

Cllr M Thirlaway for Cllr T Mulvenna

## **ASCH2/19 Declarations of Interest**

Cllr M Thirlaway declared an interest in relation to item 5 as an employee of Parkway Care which is in receipt of financial support from the Council.

## **ASCH3/19 Minutes**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

## **ASCH4/19 Covid 19 Update: Public Health and Adult Social Care**

The Sub-committee received a presentation which provided an update on Covid 19 in relation to Public Health and Adult Social Care.

The Sub-committee considered the latest figures in relation to the number of tests, rates of infection, hospital admissions and deaths for North Tyneside. It was noted that the latest figures are showing a slow downward trend. It was also noted that the north east had not seen the steep increase in cases after Christmas which had been seen in other areas, and the downward trend applied to all age groups. It was noted that recent media reports had suggested that rates had been going up in North Tyneside, but although there had been some daily fluctuations upwards, the overall trend is downwards. It was also noted that some wards had been identified as having the highest rates in the borough, but these rates were linked to specific outbreaks within the wards, and the actual numbers of cases involved were quite small.

It was noted that the new variant had been seen in 82% of the 68% of tests that went to the

labs for testing and this was a similar picture across the north east and the rest of the country. However, this is a concern as this variant is more transmissible. There have been no instances of the South African variant in the borough as yet.

It was noted that the two hospital trusts are reporting a high level of activity, but they are both providing mutual aid to other areas.

Members noted the huge effort that has gone into both asymptomatic testing and testing for those with symptoms, including the new asymptomatic testing site in North Shields for those who leave home for work, and also a national system to provide tests for larger employers.

The Sub-committee were informed of developments to introduce a local contract tracing partnership. This is allowing the authority to follow up cases that the national team have failed to contact within 24 hours. The local tracing system will also be able to offer support to individuals to enable self-isolation. This is part of a regional ambition to have a local contact tracing service.

Members raised a question about support to care homes where outbreaks are occurring and whether support is available to ensure that safety standards are adhered to. It was noted that the authority scrutinised outbreak data on a daily basis and are working closely with all homes where an outbreak is identified. There is an option to send infection control nurses to assist where necessary.

There was some discussion about staffing problems in care homes. It was noted that there have been circumstances in some homes where staffing has been an issue due to staff sickness or requirements to self isolate. Overall support has been able to be provided through the market to cover short periods of difficulty.

Members asked whether there was any testing available for those working in the community and voluntary sector who may be working on the frontline directly with vulnerable clients. It was noted that the test site at the Riverside could be used by those working in these situations. The authority does have some scope to support smaller businesses with testing as the testing kits are available for use, but there is limited resource in the authority to support the set up and training of staff.

There were some questions about the accuracy of the lateral flow tests that are being used. It was noted that accuracy was estimated to be between 50-80%, with improved accuracy when staff are well trained on how to use the tests. Tests are also more accurate when the same person is being tested on a regular basis.

The Sub-committee received information on the current situation in relation to care homes in the borough. It was noted that there are currently 11 care homes with outbreaks ie with 2 or more cases in either staff or residents.

It was noted that there has been an increase in the number of vacant beds in care homes over the last 12 months, with overall vacancies around 20% compared to a rate of around 7% before the pandemic.

There was some discussion around the take up of the vaccine. It was noted that 91% of residents and 87% of staff had received the vaccine. Some people are unable to be vaccinated due to health conditions or because they have tested positive for Covid in the last 28 days. The authority has been supporting care homes to encourage take up of the

vaccine, including holding webinars for staff.

It was noted that hospital discharges were being supported with a designated setting in place to support discharge to care settings.

The Chair thanked officers for the comprehensive briefing and for all the work that is going into support for testing and support for care homes. Members were particularly pleased to hear about the establishment of the local contact tracing system which is something the Sub-committee have wanted to see happen. The Chair noted the team effort across all service areas to support what is happening and reiterated the thanks of the sub-committee to staff and residents.

## **ASCH5/19 Feedback from the Livi Evaluation Group**

Cllr Richardson and Kirwin provided an update to the sub-committee on recent meetings they had attended as the sub-committee's representative on the CCG's Livi Evaluation Group. This group was involved in the evaluation of the one-year pilot with Livi to provide additional virtual GP consultations within the borough.

It was noted that the evaluation meetings were not public meetings. It was noted that Councillors had reservations about the Livi contract which had been discussed with the CCG at a recent informal meeting.

Both Cllr Richardson and Kirwin highlighted some concerns that had been raised at the meetings, including concerns about:

- Clinical implications of the project;
- The use of the service by those with mental health issues;
- The use of survey data collected by Livi as part of the evaluation, and the small sample size;
- The small number of consultations being undertaken per week by Livi in the context of the whole number of GP consultations per week across the whole borough;
- The impact on the GP workforce in the borough and how this is evaluated;
- Promotion of the Livi service through merchandise and digital advertising;
- Potential change to the pilot terms to allow GPs to refer into the service;
- The changed context of GP services in the light of Covid and the greater use of virtual and telephone consultations across all GP practices, and the impact of this on the need for an additional service.

There was some discussion about the issues raised with a particular focus on the need for transparency and for clear and useful data to be available to ensure the pilot can be comprehensively evaluated, before a decision is made on whether to continue with the project once the pilot ends.

It was noted that Cllr Richardson would continue to attend meetings going forward and will reflect the views of the sub-committee at these meetings.