

Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee

Thursday, 1 July 2021

Present: Councillor J Kirwin (Chair)
Councillors J Montague, J Allan, L Arkley, T Brady,
M Hall, P McIntyre, T Mulvenna, P Richardson, J Shaw,
J Harrison and J O'Shea

In attendance:
Councillor A McMullen

Apologies: Councillors J Cassidy and M Madden

ASCH7/21 Appointment of Substitute Members

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

Cllr J O'Shea for Cllr M Madden
Cllr J Harrison for Cllr J Cassidy

ASCH8/21 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Kirwin declared a personal interest in Item 8 in relation to his employment with a cancer charity and his wife's employment with Sunderland Health Trust.

ASCH9/21 Minutes

The Chair highlighted that comments received from Members in relation to study groups indicated that Members were in favour of re-establishing the Home Care Study Group, but to incorporate monitoring of the home care pilot as part of this review.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

ASCH10/21 Covid Update - Public Health and Adult Social Care

The Sub-committee received a Covid 19 update covering public health and adult social care.

It was noted that Covid rates are increasing across the country and the North East, along with the North West, now have the highest rates in the country. The rates in the borough at 1002 cases in the last 7 days are at their highest level since the beginning of the pandemic, but this is not seeing the same impact on the health service. It was noted that high rates are being driven by those under 25, but rates currently remain relatively low in the over 50s.

The sub-committee was advised that outbreaks were impacting on schools in the borough which is creating a challenging situation for schools. It was noted that four schools are currently closed and around half of schools have outbreaks. However, most young people who test positive are not experiencing illness.

In relation to the vaccine roll out, 80% of adults in the borough have received a first dose of the vaccine and 64% have received two doses. Innovative approaches are being employed to increase uptake among younger age groups, including pop up vaccination centres. It was noted that approval has not yet been given to vaccinate children under 18 years old.

A member requested clarification of figures in the presentation in terms of actual case numbers and how this translates into a rate per 100,000. It was noted that both the actual number of positive cases and the rate per 100,000 had been provided. The cases per 100,000 measurement was used nationally to allow a comparison to be made between areas.

Members highlighted concerns about the impact of school closures on education and the rules for schools in dealing with outbreaks. It was acknowledged that the strategy for schools is no longer working and representations have been made nationally about the need for changes. Schools are required to follow the national guidance and that will be the position for the next two weeks until the end of term.

It was noted that current isolation rules are impacting on businesses in the region both in terms of staff impacted and also parents who are having to look after children who are out of school. It was noted that the council had not been badly impacted by staff absences at the current time with around 30 staff currently self isolating.

There was some discussion about what is likely to happen in September. It was noted that plans are being put in place for a booster vaccine in the autumn.

Members paid tribute to the hard work of the public health team over the last 18 months.

The Sub-committee then received an update in relation to adult social care. It was noted that there is currently one outbreak in a care home in the borough although all those affected have been double vaccinated and are asymptomatic. The local authority is continuing to provide support through risk assessment and infection control advice. Care homes that are in outbreak situations are closed to visitors.

It was noted that vaccine rates for residents and staff were high at around 86% and increasing. The council is working with partners to continue to encourage vaccine take up. It was noted that the government are proposing mandatory vaccinations for all care staff from October 2021.

There was some discussion about support for residents of sheltered accommodation. It was noted that residents and staff were part of the priority group to receive vaccinations at the start of the programme.

ASCH11/21 Financial Support for Adult Social Care providers in North Tyneside

The Sub-committee considered a presentation which set out the additional financial and wider support that had been made available to care providers during the pandemic.

It was noted that the additional support had included:

- Additional weekly payment
- Fast tracked inflationary uplift – April 2020
- Additional 5% COVID compensatory payment and other cost pressure support
- Provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Occupancy support
- Grant funding

The presentation set out more detail about the payments made and also a summary of how the infection control grant was used in each round. It was noted that the infection control grant has been extended to September 2021 although allocations and conditions of this element of the grant have not yet been set out.

Councillors raised concerns about care staff being asked to take unpaid leave to cover Covid absences. It was noted that the Council have paid out grants and will check on how the funding has been used as part of the evaluation monitoring visits and audit checks to ensure funds have been used in line with grant conditions.

A question was raised about the employment of under 25s and whether any account of the lower pay for these age groups is taken into account as part of contracts with care providers. It was noted that the workforce in care homes is generally over the age of 25 and although there is a standard rate for all care homes, margins are tight, and any reduction in pay for those under 25 would be offset by other cost pressures.

It was noted that work was ongoing to ensure the transparency of contract arrangements. The Cabinet Member informed the Sub-committee that this is an area that he has a focus on. Members requested a future report to the sub-committee on this work once complete, as an exempt report if necessary.

Resolved:

- that the sub-committee note the report;
- that a further report be submitted to the sub-committee on the contract arrangements review work once complete.

ASCH12/21 Update Report from HealthWatch North Tyneside

The Sub-committee received an update from Paul Jones of Healthwatch North Tyneside on the work of Healthwatch since the beginning of the pandemic and their current priorities. A copy of the draft Annual Report was circulated to members of the sub-committee.

Since the last update from Healthwatch in early 2021, there has been a focus on Covid and people's experience of health and social care services. Experiences have changed over time from initial concerns about accessing information about services and whether services were available, the experience of those shielding, and the recent positive experience of the vaccine programme.

It was noted that Healthwatch had been involved in the setting up of the vaccine service. Healthwatch had also used this opportunity to widely distribute the Healthwatch magazine which includes health advice and information about health services in the borough.

Going forward Healthwatch will be focussing on a range of issues, including older people's mental health, prescription deliveries and GP access. Healthwatch has also been commissioned by the CCG to undertake some research on the LIVI GP service. Healthwatch is also undertaking research on Adult Social Care services, Menopause training for GPs and hospital services, including audiology and ophthalmology and mental health services.

There was some discussion about how things have operated over the last 16 months and where there have been successes. It was noted that both formal and informal relationships between health and care organisations in the borough have been fostered during the pandemic and there has been a reduction in barriers to getting things done and doing things quickly. This has been positive and hopefully will continue going forward.

Members congratulated Healthwatch on the quality of the report and for the work they have been doing.

Members requested that Healthwatch report back to the sub-committee on their research into Adult Social Care Services once this is complete.

ASCH13/21 Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the North East and North Cumbria ICS - feedback from members

The Chair provided an update from the recent meeting of the regional committee which had been held on 28 June 2021.

It was noted that detailed information was not yet available on how the new arrangements will work in practice, but tight deadlines for implementation were in place with CCGs due to be dissolved by April 2022. It was noted that the information provided emphasised place-based commissioning at a local authority level, although it was not clear how this will be done or who will make these decisions. It is also unclear what the local authority representation on ICS boards will be and whether all local authorities will be represented or whether there will be one representative for all local authorities.

Members highlighted their concerns about the level of collaboration with local authorities and local areas through the process and the level of engagement and consultation.

The Sub-committee noted the update.