

At a meeting of the HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in Committee Room 1 of the CITY HALL, SUNDERLAND on TUESDAY, 3 OCTOBER, 2023 at 5:30pm.

Present:-

Councillor Hunter in the Chair

Councillors Graham-King, Haque, Jones and Walton

Also in attendance:-

Vanessa Bainbridge – Independent Chair, Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board

Nigel Cummings – Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council

Graham King – Director of Adult Services and Chief Operating Officer, Sunderland Care and Support, Sunderland City Council

Gillian Robinson – Scrutiny and Member Support Coordinator, Sunderland City Council

Joanne Stewart – Principal Democratic Services Officer, Sunderland City Council

Gerry Taylor – Executive Director Health, Housing and Communities, Sunderland City Council

Appointment of the Chairman

Members were advised that the Vice-Chairman was going to arrive late to the meeting, it having been moved by Councillor Haque and duly seconded by Councillor Graham-King, it was:-

1. RESOLVED that Councillor Hunter be appointed Chairman.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were given on behalf of Councillors Bond, Heron, Speding, Usher and M. Walker.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 5 September, 2023

2. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on 5 September, 2023 (copies circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

Councillor Jones made an open declaration as an employee of North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS (NCIC) and Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trusts (CNTW).

Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report

The Chair of the Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board submitted a report (copy circulated) which attached the annual report highlighting the current work of Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) for the year 2022/23.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Vanessa Bainbridge, Independent Chair of the Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board took Members through the annual report, advising that it was a Care Act requirement for her to give an annual account of the work of the Board.

The work of the SSAB had focussed on strategic priorities as identified in its Strategic Delivery Plan, 2019-2024, which had been refreshed in 2021 and revisited in 2022 to ensure that they were still the priorities the Board needed to focus on. These were:-

- Prevention; and
- Local Areas of Risk;
 - o Self-Neglect;
 - o Mental Capacity;
 - o Homelessness;
 - o At Risk / Vulnerable / Complex Cases who don't meet statutory thresholds;
 - o Domestic Abuse; and
 - o Suicide Prevention.

These priorities informed the Board's local actions to safeguard adults in Sunderland and were underpinned by the Care Act's six key principles of adult safeguarding.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Bainbridge for their very detailed and thorough report and invited questions and comments from the Committee.

Councillor Walton referred to the five cases which had been considered against the Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) criteria during the year and asked what the criteria was? Ms. Bainbridge advised that it was where there had been a mortality or serious harm caused in relation to an incident or event.

In response to a further question from Councillor Walton as to whether they had expected a 20% increase in the number of concerns received, Ms. Bainbridge advised that as part of the CoVid work Sunderland took part in a programme called Insight whereby they saw the trends increasing. Post CoVid there had been an influx of the number of concerns and a rise in the complexity of cases so Officers had kept a close eye on partners and they had in turn increased their capacity in their safeguarding teams to address that. They had found, through investigations, that some of the concerns were not appropriate and could have been picked up elsewhere and that was another piece of work they were undertaking.

Mr. King commented that they always encouraged partners to submit concerns and they received a lot of notifications from Northumbria Police but this was expected as they were a busy area. He added that one of the important figures to look at was the number of concerns that go on to a Section 42 enquiry, where abuse may have

occurred, and the proportion of these had actually reduced which suggests that partners were submitting more concern notices but it did not indicate that there was more abuse being carried out in the city.

Mr King also advised that they had changed the safeguarding thresholds so that partners have got a better understanding of what and when to submit concerns so they would probably see a flattening out of figures over the coming year.

Councillor Graham-King asked if there was a prevalence as to where SAR concerns were received from and was informed that normally several agencies would be involved with the case and then an individual partner agency would refer it into the process. It would then be a collective decision as to whether it met the criteria. Mr. King also added that they encouraged partners to submit cases, as even though it may not meet the criteria there could be something to learn and share from individual cases.

In response to a query from Councillor Walton regarding the concept of mental capacity within partner agencies, Ms. Bainbridge advised that it had to be an ongoing issue for partners; new staff needed to be trained, current staff had refresher training and this was why it continued to be a priority for the board. Mr. King added that it was a complex area and gave an example whereby an individual may have difficulties with chaotic behaviour and substance misuse and you could assume that they had capacity as they were claiming they did not need help. That person's addiction could impact upon their ability to make a capacitated decision so a lot of work had been undertaken with staff and partners where it may be assumed someone had capacity but they have not.

Councillor Haque asked if they determined that a customer lacked mental capacity what it then meant for the organisation and Mr. King advised that they would work through a 'best interests' decision making process and agree the best way forward, in the best interests of that individual. Ms. Bainbridge added that it could become trickier when people did not meet the criteria as there was a legal process to be followed.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked Ms. Bainbridge and Mr. King for their attendance, and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the information provided within the Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report be received and noted.

At this juncture, Councillor Jones arrived and took the Chair for the remainder of the agenda items.

Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2022/23

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an overview of the Annual Director of Public Health Report (ADPHR) 2022/23 which describes the health and needs of the local population, focusing on issues pertinent to our communities.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Gerry Taylor, Director of Health, Housing and Communities took Members through a presentation which had been previously circulated to the Committee and focussed on the main unhealthy commodity industries which impact on health; which were:-

- Food and Drink;
- Tobacco;
- Alcohol;
- Gambling;
- Environment, including fossil fuels and pollution;
- Formula Milk; and
- Working Conditions and Benefits.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Taylor for their informative report and presentation and invited questions and comments from Members.

Councillor Jones asked for their opinion on the use of e-cigarettes and how the use of them compared with the decline in smoking tobacco and was informed by Ms. Taylor that she was due to receive a briefing on vapes within the next couple of days, which she would share with the Committee, as it was an area of concern. The Public Health perspective was that the use of e-cigarettes/vapes was much safer than smoking tobacco so they would support the use of them to help people give up smoking; but they were not good for those who had not smoked before and/or children.

Ms. Taylor advised that they continued to see the number of people smoking decrease but the number of people vaping was increasing and they were fully aware that young people were also taking up this habit.

Councillor Hunter commented that she was aware of parents that were enabling their children to use vapes, shops were selling them underage, and children were being caught in school using them and disposing of them in sanitary bins which firms were then refusing to take. Ms. Taylor thanked the Councillor and commented that it was good to be made aware of local information and advised that once they had received the briefing they could look at working with schools and gathering more local intelligence to look at how best to address the issue.

In response to a comment from Councillor Haque regarding the long-term effects of vaping, Ms. Taylor advised that they knew it was much safer than smoking and that it was not harmful in the way which tobacco was but the vapes still contained nicotine and the user could become addicted.

With regards to comments from Councillor Walton regarding recommendations within the report being at a local level, Ms. Taylor advised that most of the recommendations were specific to Sunderland as a Council or partnership, adding that there had been some very good work on a number of the issues, including planning and there were opportunities around issues such as hot food takeaways and the planning guidance. The recommendations were there to look at how they could work together to either do more or explore any issues that hadn't been addressed.

Councillor Walton referred to figure 7 within the report which set out information in relation to hot food outlets around the city and referred to the statement regarding the refusal of a number of planning applications and commented that it would be interesting to have a follow up study, if possible, on the impact of those decisions. Ms. Taylor informed the Committee that it was an area the Council would want to gather more research on but it was difficult to say how possible it would be, as it was not the only intervention addressing childhood obesity for example.

Councillor Walton also referred to the threshold on gambling premises in town centres and asked if this was limited to those areas. Ms. Taylor commented it was a general statement and some of the work would be looking more widely across the North East and strengthening the guidance around gambling across the city as a whole.

Councillor Jones commented that the report was very forward thinking and that she was excited to see what lay ahead and commented that it highlighted a number of tactics that large corporations used to promote and champion their brands and asked how realistic or achievable some of the recommendations were, given the resources they had at their disposal? Ms. Taylor commented that the report tried to get Officers and Members thinking about what they could do at a local level as they were not able to influence everything. It hoped the recommendations would make a difference to what the Council and Partners in Sunderland and the North East could do and they would try to evaluate and research on what was undertaken; but the Chairman was right whereby some of the larger, international organisations were vastly wealthy and put a lot of resource into their marketing and tactics.

In response to a further query from Councillor Jones in relation to rises in gambling, problematic alcohol use and poor diet which could be seen during a cost of living crisis, Ms. Taylor explained that they had to take account of the current environment and how that may impact on what people could do with regards to their general wellbeing when they may be feeling pressure and anxiety. There was a lot of work being carried out around financial wellbeing and the impact of that on residents due to the cost of living crisis that had been prevalent over the past couple of years.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked Ms. Taylor their attendance and presentation, and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the information provided within the Annual Report be received and noted.

Task and Finish Group: Integrating Services at the Neighbourhood Level

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Coordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which established background information, set the scene and set out an approach for a task and finishing group looking at the integration of healthcare services at the local level in Sunderland.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, took Members through the report which provided context to the issues, the overall aim of the working group and the proposed terms of reference for the working group. The report provided a number of

sources for evidence gathering and the general scope of the review and a draft timetable for it to be undertaken.

In response to queries, Mr. Cummings advised that the meetings would look to take place every three to four weeks and would usually last approximately one hour. The meetings would incorporate some site visits and key officers being in attendance and could look to be a combination of in person and MS Teams meetings as suitable.

There being no further questions, the Chairman thanked Mr. Cummings for his report, and it was:-

5. RESOLVED that:-

- i) The title of the working group review be agreed as 'Integrated Care in Sunderland';
- ii) The terms of reference as set out for the task and finish working group be agreed; and
- iii) The membership of the working group be agreed by the Committee and the appointment of the Chairman be agreed at their first meeting.

Work Programme 2023/2024

The Scrutiny, Mayoral and Members' Support Coordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which attached the proposed work programme for the year for consideration and agreement.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising that the report included a number of potential topics to consider along with the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023/24.

Members having considered the report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the contents of the work programme and the update on the task and finish working group for 2023/24 be received and noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Strategic Director of People, Communications and Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from 13th September, 2023.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, having advised that if any further Members wished to receive further information on any of the items contained in the notice they should contact him directly, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance and participation.

(Signed) C. HUNTER,
Chair

B. JONES,
Chair

