

At a meeting of the HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held remotely using Microsoft Teams and livestreamed on YouTube on WEDNESDAY, 25th NOVEMBER, 2020 at 5.30p.m.

Present:-

Councillor D. Dixon in the Chair

Councillors Butler, Davison, Essl, Greener, Haswell, Heron, Leadbitter, Mann and McClennan

Also in attendance:-

Mr. David Chandler – Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Chief Officer, SCCG

Mr. Nigel Cummings – Scrutiny Officer, SCC

Ms. Ann Dingwall – Commissioning Manager, SCC

Mr. Graham King – Assistant Director Adult Services, SCC

Ms. Joanne Stewart – Principal Governance Services Officer, SCC

Ms. Gerry Taylor – Executive Director of Public Health and Integrated Commissioning, SCC

Mr. Scott Watson – Director of Contracting, Planning and Informatics, SCCG

The Chairman opened the meeting and introductions were made. He welcomed Ms. Gerry Taylor, Executive Director of Public Health and Integrated Commissioning, to her first meeting of the Committee and wished her well in her new post in the Council.

The Chairman also advised that Councillor Neil MacKnight had been appointed as Vice-Chairman to the Committee at the recent meeting of the Council and welcomed his support in his new role on the Committee.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence given.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 28th October, 2020

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on 28th October, 2020 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

CoVid-19 in Sunderland – Update

The Executive Director of Public Health and Integrated Commissioning and the Assistant Director of Adult Services submitted a joint report which advised that they would look to provide the Committee with an ongoing update, providing the latest information and key issues, with key health partners and officers, in relation to the CoVid-19 pandemic in Sunderland.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Taylor, Executive Director of Public Health and Integrated Commissioning, gave a brief verbal update on the latest public health developments in relation to CoVid-19 across the city. Mr. King, Assistant Director of Adult Services gave a presentation to the Committee which provided information on the current position in relation to adult social care across the city and the impact on services as a result of the pandemic.

(for copy presentation – see original minutes)

Councillor Dixon thanked Officers for their presentations and invited questions and comments from the Committee.

Councillor Butler referred to the closure of day centres and asked what the scrutiny process behind making this decision had been and how Members could engage with Officers and how the delegated powers had been taken. He also asked what alternative provisions there were and which risk assessments had been undertaken before closing the day centres, commenting that neighbouring local authorities had taken different approaches; as he was aware that Newcastle had not closed theirs; and asking why Sunderland had taken a different decision.

Councillor Butler went on to state that it had been eluded that the decision would be revisited when it was felt that it was safe enough for them to open and asked when that decision would be taken and if there was a plan in place to come out of the closures, and if the decision on this changed in relation to the Government's tiering system and where Sunderland were placed. With the introduction of rapid flow testing Councillor Butler asked if this would facilitate the reopening of the day care centres or influence the decision around families being able to visit loved ones in care homes and commented that Officers had to consider the mental health impacts these decisions were having on people, whilst also addressing the safety of staff and social care workers.

Mr. King gave the Committee a quick overview of the decision making process behind closing the day centres, advising that Officers had met towards the end of October and agreed that a recommendation should be made to the Council's silver command to close the day centres; with it then being passed to gold command level for ratification or otherwise if they felt that was not the right course of action. A number of Officers had met and discussed a range of factors including the prevalence of the pandemic and the level of risk at that time, as well as the vulnerability of users and the position within local hospitals.

As a result of this the temporary closure of the day services was recommended and Officers had to look at putting in place mitigation issues and actions for families where they could. Once the recommendation was made Officers knew that this

would have to be implemented quickly, which could have been difficult for families who may not have felt like they had had enough notification of the changes but during the pandemic it was necessary to carry out decisions quickly as to have waited would only have presented a higher risk.

Ms. Dingwall advised that they were well advanced in terms of the reopening plans and explained that throughout the temporary closures SCAS staff had continued to meet with social workers and commissioners and had re-established a priority based list as to which users needs can only be met in a day care service, or those who could access alternative arrangements, etc. so that these risk assessments were not left until the last minute. A meeting was scheduled for the following week which had been timed to coincide with leaving national lockdown.

Ms. Dingwall advised that SCAS staff had also worked throughout the temporary closures to support people out in the community with alternative arrangements, which allowed families to have that break that the day care services may have offered them. As the staff were not redeployed, Ms. Dingwall advised that they could then be pulled back into the day services without delay to allow a reopen. The decision regarding the reopening of services would be dependent upon further scrutiny of the risk assessments, the tier Sunderland were placed in and the numbers of community transmission in the city. As everything had been well planned they were not expecting the reopen to take any length of time once that decision had been made.

With regards to the lateral flow tests, Mr. King advised that there was the potential to factor the use of these in to being available to members of staff, service users and family but advised that this was still an area that needed to be thought through further.

In relation to Councillor Butler's query regarding other local authorities, Mr. King commented that he knew of services in neighbouring authorities that had never reopened after the first national lockdown but then again there were some that had never closed. Most who had remained open may work in a different way to allow that, so either with a reduced capacity or by having the facilities to social distance. He assured Members that all providers were looking at their risk assessments again to see if they could reopen in the coming weeks and Officers would continue to keep Members informed. He took on board the short notice Members had received regarding this temporary closure of the day services, i.e. the day before, but they would continue to keep both Members and families informed as soon as was possible in the future.

Councillor Dixon commented that as one of the signatories on the board it had not been a decision that had been taken lightly but once advised that it would take a large amount of luck to keep a CoVid outbreak out of the day care services then the decision to temporarily close them was the only one he could consciously have agreed to.

Councillor Davison referred to the transmission of the virus and commented that those that she was familiar with were all school related, with children who then returned home to infect their families, and Ms. Taylor advised that often the cases in schools were as a result of household transmission. Ms. Taylor explained that they

had not seen significant transmission numbers in schools but that it had often been a household transmission that was then identified within school.

Councillor MacKnight referred to the national guidance that had been provided to care homes and asked if the Committee could be advised on some of the arrangements that were being investigated to allow face to face visiting. Mr. King advised that this had been a real issue in care homes over the last few months and they had worked with them on a range of solutions to get a different forms of visiting made available. All care homes had iPads or tablets to allow online visiting, others had visiting pods in the grounds which allowed visits whilst maintaining social distance, others allowed windows visits or drive by visits in vehicles. Mr. King commented that there had been a real resilience and innovation shown by the care homes but he completely understood the importance of face to face visits and touching for some service users. He explained that they did now have the national guidance, although this needed to be worked through and more information gathered, and stated that there had been a timeline set out of allowing visits by 18th December, 2020. He commented that this was a massive ask of care homes and advised that they would need to remain mindful of those homes where there were ongoing outbreaks of the virus.

Ms. Dingwall added that they were keen for service providers to have their own guidance on the issue and to share this with residents and families to ensure everyone was clear of options available to them and what arrangements would come in place if there was to be an outbreak. She explained that they had undertaken a lot of work to benchmark who was doing what in this area and Healthwatch had carried out a piece of work around the use of social media, producing a report evidencing some very good practice, but obviously this did not suit all. They were currently working through the pro's and con's of what was available so that they had a clear view of what was happening in the market and could provide advice and support.

Councillor Haswell referred to transmission rates of the virus and referred to discussions at the last meeting where it had been suggested that transmissions were predominately in the workplace and asked if this remained the case? If this was the case, he asked if Officers were aware of any repeat offenders who may need more advice and support, or if there was simply a lack of action by companies and in that case was there a need for sanctions to be issued? He also asked if transmissions were not occurring in the workplace where did they feel the virus now spreading and what action could be taken to prevent this.

Ms. Taylor advised that they were still seeing transmission within some workplaces and where that occurred, support was given to ensure the right procedures were in place and that guidelines were being followed. She advised that she was not aware of any repeat offenders or those that had not taken the advice given following an outbreak. Some cases had been reported from outbreaks in care homes, where again they had provided support and advice. A significant number of the transmissions were through community and household mixing and the key issues around reducing social contact, not meeting up with people, following general and lockdown guidance which were very important.

In response to a further question from Councillor Haswell regarding job interviews in the current climate and comments that he had been surprised in his own experience at being asked to visit businesses for those; he asked if Officers had come across

any cases where this may be causing spreads and if there was any guidance in relation to this as it could be a developing issue given the change in employment trends over the previous months. Ms. Taylor advised that this was helpful to know but that she was not aware of any cases where this particular issue had caused a problem and commented that every workplace should have CoVid secure arrangements to reduce transmission and protect people coming into their workplace.

Ms. Taylor commented that the current and ongoing guidance was that people should work from home where they could and felt that this may need to be reinforced to reduce people entering the workplace unnecessarily.

Councillor Dixon referred to the vaccination programme and commented that it was going to be one of the biggest public health vaccination programmes in our lifetime and asked if conversations had begun with central Government and key local organisations like the CCG and local authorities to develop a vaccination plan. Ms. Taylor advised that there was a significant amount of work being undertaken at the moment looking at how an approved vaccine would be delivered locally and how residents would be prioritised for delivery of the vaccine.

Mr. Chandler added that across the whole of the NHS there was an enormous amount of work being carried out around the logistics of how the vaccination programme was to be delivered, although they do have already experience of mass vaccination programmes just not on this scale and they were also aware that this vaccine came with its own unusual challenges. The plan would be multi-faceted as to how it would be rolled out and he informed Members that it was a fast moving scheme, which changed by the day, but hoped that this gave Members assurances that it was being dealt with without being able to provide a detailed set out plan at this time.

Councillor MacKnight requested that Ms. Taylor look to advise Members of the Committee, as soon as was possible, once the tier for the area had been allocated through central Government.

The Committee thanked all those in attendance for their hard work and dedication during these unprecedented times and appreciated all of the work that was being undertaken during very challenging circumstances, and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the updates provided within the report and presentations be received and noted.

Adult Mental Health Strategy - Update

The Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group submitted a report which provided an updates on the SCCG's commencement on work to develop a new commissioning strategy for Mental Health services in Sunderland.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Scott Watson, Director of Contracting, Planning and Informatics gave a presentation to Members which provided a brief overview for Members on the

development of Sunderland CCG's Adult Mental Health Strategy which was currently at stage two of the process; reviewing the intelligence that had been gathered at stage one and commencing the formal engagement stage.

(for copy presentation – see original minutes)

Councillor Dixon thanked Mr. Watson for his presentation and invited questions and comments from the Committee.

Councillor MacKnight welcomed the piece of work and commented that it was fair to say that the strategy was long overdue. He commented that he had been heavily involved in sports clubs and through these had come across young people who were suffering with their mental health; the issue he had found was for coaches and staff, etc. knowing where to signpost young people, especially in the age groups 11-19 and the transition period from child to adult. Mr. Watson advised that from a children and young people perspective he was aware that this was something they were well aware of and investigating and they were already exploring establishing a single point of access. He would look to feed the comments around the adult issues and transition into the adult strategy process.

In a follow up comment, Councillor MacKnight stated that he was a big fan of staff and agencies receiving training in mental health first aid and he was aware that this was something Washington MIND were providing around the city and he would like to see more workplaces offering a similar package.

Councillor Butler commented that this was a big task given the current climate and he was pleased to see the issue being tackled, although surprised to hear that there was not already a mental health strategy in place in the CCG. He asked in what context service users were being engaged with and commended the comments in relation to social prescribing and hoped that there would be some channelling of funds to look to support initiatives aimed towards young men with mental health issues. Mr. Watson advised that they were using a different range of mediums as they recognised there was not one particular way that would suit all. He advised that there would be access to online surveys, they would use focus groups through the voluntary and community sector, and look to interview those persons who were willing to engage. They wanted as many views and comments as possible and would be approaching patients, service users and the public as a whole to reach as far as possible.

In relation to the transformation fund, Mr. Watson commented that at this point they needed to take on board what issues came through the strategy and engagement work and shape services around the identified needs. He stated it would be premature for him to say that there would definitely be funding aimed towards men's mental health but services were very aware of the issues in that area, in relation to suicide especially, with Sunderland being an outlier in that regard, so they were mindful of it and he would feed Councillor Butler's comments back.

Councillor Heron referred to the transition from children's mental health services to adult's being investigated and commented that she was aware of young people suffering from anorexia nervosa who had previously had problems in the past when becoming an adult and the clear pathway of services. She also commented that she loved the phrase 'clear and transparent' as it could be difficult for people to want to

talk about mental health issues but if there was a clear signpost to services it could make it easier and she welcomed the report.

Mr. Watson advised that in relation to eating disorders part of the funding had to be focussed on that exact issue so he would hope that the Committee would be able to see that clear pathway and the outcomes they expected for people accessing those services in the future.

Councillor McClennan referred to the use of the voluntary and community services (VCS) and commented that she was worried as to how the Council were now consulting with and involving those services as she was aware that presently they were up in arms over proposals to completely change the area arrangements and employ new staff, etc. She referred to the mention that the VCS had been consulted with and were supporting the process in focus groups which was brilliant but asked how far they had gone with talking directly with VCS organisations and asking from their expertise what they felt was really needed in communities.

Mr. Watson referred to the All Together Better Alliance in Sunderland within which were four programmes of work; programme two was around mental health, learning disabilities and autism; and advised that the voluntary sector were already around the table at those discussions with NHS providers and that they were an intrinsic part of the group providing input and feedback from an expertise perspective. Throughout the pre-engagement process they had met with VCS organisations a number of times to gain their perspective as a key provider of some of those services.

Councillor McClennan also referred to the long term sustainability of the VCS and stated that we had to get the VCS network fit, healthy, CoVid free and financially secure and capable to deliver more services for the Council as it was apparent that there was to be more years of austerity and reliance on the third sector to help deliver services, and it was important to have them on more of an equal and secure footing. Mr. Watson agreed fully with Councillor McClennan's comments and advised that as part of the funding being made available for community mental health, one of the prerequisites was that services were designed had to show how they were integrating more of the VCSO services into the mainstream provision. He hoped this would also see organisations being put onto more of a firmer footing.

Councillor McClennan asked how much emphasis would be placed on the growing and emerging need of the impact of CoVid on children and adult's mental health and if they were gearing up to any expertise in that area or if it was already in place, and if not could the expertise be developed. Mr. Watson commented that they absolutely were taking it into account but as previously alluded to, this was a very much live situation so they didn't quite know what the level of demand was going to be. Anecdotally, they did know that GP's were seeing more presentations of patients and with a varied range of issues, such as anxiety, and that they were presenting from a much young and broader demographic so they were trying to recognise this as much as they possibly could in the strategy, whilst being mindful that it was an issue that would continue to develop at the same time as the strategy was being developed. Therefore, it may be something they would need to address more dynamically over the coming months.

Councillor Dixon thanked Mr. Watson for his informative presentation and report, endorsing the move towards the development of the mental health strategy and in closing, commented that often GP services were central to everything and a first stop for people who felt mentally unwell. He hoped that the strategy would closely look at the role of GP's and at the accessibility of services; making them as widely available and known of across the largest scope that they could; making information widely available, and ensuring service providers could improve awareness through use of community centres, highstreets, supermarkets, and support from local councillors.

Councillor Dixon also commented that he would like to think that services worked to ensure that in developing the strategy that every sector of the mental health economy in Sunderland was sufficiently engaged and looked forward to an update in due course.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report

The Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board submitted a report which highlighted the current work of the Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) during the year 2019-2020.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. King, Assistant Director of Adult Services, presented the report advising that it was a Care Act requirement from the Independent Chairman of the Safeguarding Adults Board to give an annual account of the work of the Board. The SSAB focussed on four strategic priorities as identified in its Strategic Delivery Plan 2019-2024. Mr King advised Members that they were currently advertising for the new Chairman of the Safeguarding Adults Board and he would advised the Committee in due course once that appointment had been made.

Councillor McClennan referred to pages 26 and 27 of the report and the '2019/20 in figures' and commented that seeing the figures in an abstract form without previous figures was quite difficult as it was not possible to see any pattern or whether there were increases or decreases in the amounts or the reasons as to why there had been any changes. She also referred to her main area of concern which was that of abuse and stated that the report did not explain enough around the figures, for example main location of abuse in individual's own homes was 47% but had this figure gone up or down and why had it changed, if it had? Again under main categories of abuse there was 23% recorded as neglect but it did not give information as to whether this was self-neglect or family neglect for example. She asked if there was any way that the next report could track differences or have a subsequent report that tracks differences over periods of time, especially given the change in society we were currently undergoing, and to allow the Committee to get a better feel as to what was going on in communities and care homes.

Mr. King commented that the detail around the trends was not necessarily picked up as part of the annual report but advised that Members would recall as part of the quarterly update reports provided to the Committee they were given more levels of detail around the safeguarding figures and numbers of concerns, as well as

categories of abuse. In future Officers could look to tease out more information within next year's annual report and they could look to have that more detailed discussion when the quarterly reports were submitted to future meetings of the Committee, perhaps ensuring that the safeguarding sections are brought more to the forefront of the report.

In relation to this year, Mr. King advised that the general trend showed a slow rise in the number of concerns received, which was a good thing as they promoted the message to report and if in any doubt to refer issues. The number of concerns having moved onto a Section 42 enquiry or investigation was pretty stable but he could go into much more detail when the quarterly reports were brought to the Committee going forward.

Councillor McClennan found the quarterly reports very informative but commented that they covered so much and there were so many good stories to share that Members could sometimes lose sight of what was not working or why it had not been. Therefore, it may be beneficial for Members to be provided with a separate report when Officers clearly know where there are increases and provide information as to what could be done to focus on that area.

Mr. King suggested that they could provide a six-monthly interim, detailed report which could go into much more detail on safeguarding issues if the Committee were agreeable.

Councillor Davison referred to working in partnership with Northumbria Police and referred back to a suicide prevention patrol which had been developed in the North Sunderland area, with a police officer and mental health worker, and asked if this was still being carried out. Mr. King advised that he would look into this and report back but advised that they did work very closely with Northumbria Police and partners on a safeguarding adults multi agency hub in the city which was quite successful.

Councillor MacKnight asked which groups of people were being targeted for safeguarding training and also asked what was being done to change the culture of organisations and staff reporting and raising safeguarding concerns so that they continue to be promoted and are not seen negatively by some groups. Mr. King advised that the service work with all of the statutory agencies in training but also expand beyond that to train taxi drivers and other service industries, enabling them to be able to spot and report any signs of potential abuse. He informed Members that the training service had not stopped during the pandemic but that obviously it had been changed to a more Teams or Zoom based service rather than being classroom based but explained that they had also developed a number of workbooks which were available on the website that any agency could use and they would continue to promote and advise that these tools were available.

Councillor Dixon commented that the report highlighted the continued importance of training and that it was good to note that it appeared to be well received and asked if as a result of the increased training if the Board had noticed any significant improvements. He also asked what the key issues were for the Board in moving forward for the new year and was informed by Mr. King that in terms of key issues the Board had recognised they needed to do more about promoting the work of the Board and the materials available on the website. The Board needed to be more

active regionally to see how areas could work together jointly on issues. There was also more work needed to be undertaken on self-neglect as it was rising slightly and the need to undertake some work revising the multi-agency procedures, all of which was set out in detail behind the annual report in an action plan for the Board.

With regards to the levels of training available, Mr. King advised that they had quite a range of training content from general alerter training, which was open to everybody, to more specialised and quite specific safeguarding training, such as sexual exploitation, missing and other categories of abuse.

The Chairman having thanked Mr King for his report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and that an interim six month report in relation to safeguarding, as set out above, be included within the work programme for the future.

Annual Work Programme 2020/21

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Coordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which sought the Committee's agreement of the draft scrutiny work programme for 2020/21.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor McClennan asked if there was any mileage to looking at dental services in the city and how they were coping during the CoVid pandemic; including what financial and training support they were being given, if any, and who it was from.

Mr. Chandler advised that NHS England had commissioned work with dental services and that he would be happy to facilitate with the Scrutiny Officer to identify a relevant person(s) to come along to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss this with Members.

Members having considered the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the work programme 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 19 October, 2020.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

201013/525 – To extend the contract for the provision of Public Health Services in Primary Care for a period of 24 months, utilising available optional extension periods of 2x12 month set out within the contract, which is held with various GP's and Pharmacies within Sundelrand

Councillor McClennan requested that a briefing note be provided in respect of the above decision and the reasoning behind it.

Mr Cummings 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:-

4. RESOLVED that a briefing note be requested as set out above and the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

(Signed) D. DIXON,
Chairman.