

At a meeting of the HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Committee Room 1 of the CITY HALL, SUNDERLAND on WEDNESDAY, 5th JULY, 2022 at 5:30pm.

Present:-

Councillor Butler in the Chair

Councillors Ayre, Bond, Chisnall, McDonough, Potts, Speding and Usher.

Also in attendance:-

Dr. Carol Aitken – General Practitioner, Sunderland GP Alliance
Mr. David Chandler – North East and North Cumbria ICS
Pauline Fletcher – Senior Primary Care Manager NHS England (North East and North Yorkshire)
Simon Taylor - Chair of the Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Local Dental Network
Julie Parker Walton – Public Health Specialist
Mr. Nigel Cummings – Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council
Mr. Philip Foster – Managing Director, All Together Better Alliance
Ms. Gillian Robinson – Scrutiny, Mayoral and Members' Support Coordinator, Sunderland City Council
Ms. Andrea Hetherington – Director of Corporate Affairs and Legal, South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
Ms. Karen Mould – Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were given on behalf of Councillor Mann and Ms. Gerry Taylor, Executive Director of Public Health, Housing and Communities, Sunderland City Council

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 6th April, 2022

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on 6th April, 2022 (copy circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

Item 6 – Annual Work Programme 2022/23

Councillor Butler made an open declaration in the above item as an employee of North Cumbria Integrated Care Services.

Update on General Dental Access

NHS England submitted a report which provided the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with an update in respect of general dental services.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Pauline Fletcher, Senior Primary Care Manager, NHS England, took Members through the report advising of the current access to NHS dentistry following the previous update that was received on 7 July 2021.

Ms Fletcher explained that there was no formal registration in NHS dentistry and that dental contracts and provision was activity and demand led with practices expected to best meet the needs of patients presenting to the practice. She advised that Covid-19 and strict infection prevention control had significantly impacted on access to dental care and consequently the demand for dental care remained high across all NHS dental practices.

Ms Fletcher highlighted that there were 22 NHS dental providers delivering general dental services across 26 locations within Sunderland. She advised that a practice in Washington was due to close at the end of August 2022 due to retirement and that it was intended to re-commission the activity as quickly as possible. Patients that required emergency dental services were triaged remotely via NHS 111 and booked into a treatment centre if required. The Community Dental Service was available for vulnerable patients, those with additional medical needs or more complex medical problems.

Members attention was drawn to the pressures and challenges of: Covid-19 impacts; workforce recruitment and retention and dental system reform. Ms Fletcher provided an overview of the local measures in place to address the issues.

The Chair thanked Ms Fletcher for the presentation and invited questions and comments from the Committee.

With regard to a query from Councillor Bond regarding the number of UDA commissioned and performed in 2009/10 and Q1 2022/23, Ms Fletcher advised that data used was not 'real' however the percentage of take up of adult and children was increasing and that Sunderland was performing favourably nationally for adults; there was an increase in children being seen and priority routes to be seen.

Responding to a further query from Councillor Bond, Ms Fletcher advised that Silver and Charlton still had a large NHS contract which had not been handed back. However, due to the ongoing workforce issues and demand for other services offered by the practice, there were no available NHS appointments until November 2022, although urgent access slots were available. Ms Fletcher explained that discussions were ongoing with Silver and Charlton on how they could be supported. Whilst work was ongoing to look at increasing capacity and appointment slots across Sunderland, addressing the workforce shortage was an issue.

Councillor McDonough asked about the number of people not accessing dental services. Ms Fletcher explained that figures were indicative only which did not give a

true representation. Referring to the Washington practice Councillor McDonough noted that 11,000 DAU would be lost and questioned when the gap would be filled. Ms Fletcher replied that the notice period to hand back a contract was 3 months following which the reason why would be sought with an endeavour to resolve the issue. Whether any other Washington practice would take on the activity would be known in a few weeks following which a procurement process would be undertaken, and this could take up to 9-12 months.

Councillor Speding commented that the complexity of accessing dental provision was difficult for the members of the public to understand. Ms Fletcher explained the process for accessing treatment but highlighted the importance of stating the urgency when contacting a practice and contracting NHS 111 for an urgent slot. In response to a further question from Councillor Speding, Ms Fletcher advised that: Health Education England trained dentists; there were some providers offering a golden hello and she was not aware of a commitment to remain within the NHS following training.

Councillor Usher commented that dentists can make more money within the private sector to which Ms Fletcher replied that this was being looked at nationally to see how this could be addressed.

Councillor Ayre referred to the number of dentistry students. Mr Taylor explained that there had been a shift in popularity. Ms Fletcher added that flexible working was popular with dentists and therefore fewer were working full time. Mr Taylor added that dentists often suffered from muscular skeletal problems due to the nature of the role.

Ms Fletcher concluded that £9m had been allocated to general dental access. She added that recruitment and retention had not been a significant issue for Sunderland however this was increasing and recruitment and retention needed to be addressed locally and nationally.

The Chairman thanked Ms Fletcher for her report, and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the update and information received be noted.

Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2021/22

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities submitted a report which provided an overview of the Annual Director of Public Health Report (ADPHR) 2021/22 which described the health and needs of the local population and focused on the issues pertinent to the local communities. The report also provided recommendations from ADPHR for continuing to improve the health and wellbeing of the population and reducing health inequalities.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

The Committee were provided with a comprehensive update and were taken through the presentation by Ms Parker Walton, Public Health Specialist, which focused on the impact that the pandemic had had on the wider determinants of health and health

inequalities in Sunderland. The report highlighted some of the key challenges but also set out the great work that was happening across the city and a number of recommendations to try to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

Ms Parker Walton took Members of the Committee through the ADPHR which provided details on:-

- Health Inequalities And Effects Of Covid-19;
- Healthy City Plan;
- Starting well in Sunderland;
- Living well in Sunderland;
- Ageing well in Sunderland;
- The impact of Covid-19 on access to public health, health and adult social care and NHS services; and
- Moving forward – key recommendations.

The Chair thanked Ms Parker Walton for her informative report. He added that it was important to have a balanced plan and objectives that would benefit the health of the residents and therefore green space was essential not only to support with their health and emotional wellbeing but also provide somewhere for young people to play. He commented that Planning Committees intended to use green space for developments and requested that Ms Parker Walton liaise with relevant officers with regard to retaining green space for the wellbeing and health of the residents.

Ms Parker Walton replied that she would explore opportunities to engage with the relevant committees.

Councillor McDonough stated it was a worrying and uncertain time. He referred to increasing child poverty which he was of the opinion suggested some things were not working and that there was not a huge amount of change or new ideas within the report. He concluded that more prevention was required for alcohol use and food poverty.

Ms Parker Walton replied that The Alcohol Strategy was ten years old and advised that work was ongoing with Aspire, an early intervention alcohol service adding that the Sunderland Wide Alcohol Partnership had established an Action Plan. In addition, a Food Partnership Coordinator had been appointed to develop a public health approach to improving the food system of the city. This would include developing and implementing a food action plan with key colleagues and partners.

Mr Chandler acknowledged Councillor McDonough's worries however highlighted that health outcomes were poor nationally. Mr Chandler explained that the partnership work in Sunderland focused on the key issues and challenges and informed Members that there would be a focus on tackling the inequalities for the children of Sunderland, for which he would be held account. Mr Chandler concluded that there was a lot of optimism in Sunderland.

The Chair commented that people worked hard in Sunderland despite the challenges. He reported that some people turn to alcohol as a coping mechanism sitting social issues as one of the root causes of poverty.

Councillor Potts referred to the number of young people attending A&E and the Drug and Alcohol Strategy. Ms Parker Walton advised of a new Ministerial document on combatting drug use and recovery grants to get more into treatment. It was noted that new national partnership reporting lines were needed with an action plan by the end of the year. Sunderland already had an integrated YDAP service but the action plan need to be published.

Councillor Ayre referred to Section 6 which outlined the impact of Covid-19 on service delivery and the collaborative approach to addressing the collective challenges and redressing the balance. The report did not include data and, because of this, did not reflect the effectiveness of the commissioning service. Ms Parker Walton agreed that data should be included to highlight this and would forward the information to Councillor Ayre.

Councillor Speding was in agreement with the Chair regarding planning decisions to develop green space and the fundamental impact this would have on the mental wellbeing of residents. The Environment Agency did not consider the residents and Councillor Speding reiterated that the planning issues would impact on child poverty. He noted the difference in demographics in terms of the differing levels of deprivation in Sunderland and highlighted that in Fulwell there were 13% of children living in low income families whilst in Hendon this was 42%. Council Chisnall referred to paragraph 3.2 and the impact of the pandemic on pay levels commenting that people who were on a good wage were now struggling with the cost of living crisis.

Turning to domestic abuse, Councillor Chisnall asked if there had been an increase during the pandemic as a result of people working from home who were living with perpetrators. Ms Parker Walton agreed to speak with Councillor Chisnall outside of the meeting to discuss further action.

Councillor Bond asked what was being done to address and prevent social isolation. Ms Parker Walton explained that work was ongoing although there were no specific interventions for isolation included within the report. She agreed to get back to Councillor Bond outside of the meeting with further details. Mr Chandler reported that Graham King collated data and therefore could have specific details and figures.

A discussion ensued regarding the availability of allotments. It was noted that there was a waiting list in Sunderland but that horticultural work was ongoing in schools.

The Chairman thanked Ms Parker Walton for her report and presentation and the information provided, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the Committee supported the recommendations commented on the Annual Director of Public Health Report 2021/22

Annual Work Programme 2022/2023

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Coordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided a range of topics and issues to consider in the development of the work programme for the municipal year ahead.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising that the report included a number of potential task and finish or work review topics to consider along with a draft Scrutiny Work Programme for 2022/23. He informed the Committee that the work programme was a 'living' document and could continue to incorporate emerging issues as and when they arose throughout the forthcoming year.

Members having considered the report and update, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the work programme be received and noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Coordinator 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 15 June 2022.

(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:-

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

The Chair then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their participation.

(Signed) M. Butler
Chairman.