

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of **Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 16 July 2024 at 9.30 am**

Present

Councillor V Andrews (Chair)

Members of the Committee

Councillors M Johnson, D Haney, J Higgins, L Hovvels, P Jopling, C Kay, K Robson and A Savory

Co-opted Member

Mrs R Gott

Co-opted Employees/Officers

Ms G McGee, Healthwatch County Durham

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Blakey, R Crute, K Earley, L Holmes, C Lines, S Quinn, M Simmons, T Stubbs and Ms A Stobbart.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitutes.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred to Community Pharmacies that was discussed at the last meeting where it was agreed to formulate a letter to the Secretary of State around the inadequacies of the existing funding arrangements. He advised Members that a response had been received from the Secretary of State that had been circulated to all Members of the Committee and highlighted the main points contained within the letter. He continued that they could look at including this as an item in the work programme later in the year when there

was an indication of any potential policy announcements from government in this respect.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillor D Haney declared an Interest in Agenda Item No. 6 as an employee of South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust.

5 Any Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised Members that a copy of the Healthwatch County Durham Annual Report had been circulated to Members of the Committee and Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He continued that the Healthwatch County Durham Annual report would be considered at the next meeting of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6 North East and North Cumbria ICB Joint Forward Plan 2023/24 to 2028/29 Update

The Committee received a presentation on the North East and North Cumbria ICB Joint Forward Plan 2023/24 to 2028/29 Update (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The Director of Local Delivery/Head of Integrated Commissioning was in attendance to deliver the presentation that provided the difference between an ICS, ICB and an ICP; areas covered; ICB Budget Overview; Strategic aims of ICBs set by Government; Developing the Integrated Care Strategy; Significant Change experience by the NENC ICB in its first year of operation; the NENC way, Key Achievements and the Impact in County Durham.

Councillor Jopling complemented the 111 service saying that in her experience it had improved. She then referred to the waiting lists for knee and hip replacements that were still not carried out in a timely manner and stated that the current waiting time was a year.

Councillor Robson referred to dentistry and indicated that his local dentist was now private and asked if there was anything being done to improve this service.

The Director of Local Delivery/Head of Integrated Commissioning responded that Dentistry had been considered by the Committee earlier in the year where they talked about the national policy actions that had been put into place to attract dentists to areas that had under provision and the introduction of mobile services. She continued that reform was needed for dental services and the dental contract was a challenge for the dentists who work across the region. When she attended the Committee previously dentists from the local dental committee had come along

and gave their perspective on this. There were a range of things that they were doing to bring more dentists to the region to help commission services for underserved areas, but it was recognised that it was an ongoing challenge and a pressure. With regard to the waiting lists for the replacement of hips and knees they were reducing the waiting lists, but they had not eradicated them resulting in some long waits in County Durham. However, the service was doing comparatively well with other parts of the region and country. She congratulated County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust who had been proactive in the work done to begin the elimination of waiting lists.

Councillor Hovvells expressed concerns that mental health was the poor relation in terms of funding when compared with other health services and asked if there were any plans to do more in terms of mental health.

The Director of Local Delivery/Head of Integrated Commissioning responded that mental health services were coming higher up the agenda of health related issues. She continued that mental health was an increasingly high priority issue being the single biggest long-term condition in County Durham and issue that the population was facing. She also referenced the Mental Health Investment Standard that ensured that increased investment in mental health services that was monitored robust. She stated that during the pandemic, mental health issues and mental illness had increased. This had resulted in mental health not being talked about in isolation anymore but discussed within the context of all health pathways.

Councillor Haney indicated that he was not sure that this was the reality of the patients experience on the ground. He then referred to the presentation at an earlier meeting of the Committee where he raised concerns about University Hospital North Durham where there were 5 beds in a 4-bed bay that was put down to winter pressures, but he indicated that this was still occurring.

The Director of Local Delivery/Head of Integrated Commissioning responded that in terms of urgent and emergency care, the challenges were huge, and demand was at its highest with more people presenting to the emergency department than ever including ambulance conveyances. There was equally a huge focus on how they can improve and regionally they had an Urgent and Emergency Care Improvement Board and members of the Board were experts from across the field looking at what could be done to make improvements. Locally the Accident and Emergency Board always had a strong focus on improvements and experience and stated that a report would be considered by the committee on winter planning and the work of the local Accident & Emergency Board which may be an opportunity to explore some of these issues in more detail.

Councillor Savoury referred to ambulance hand over times that was a concern and heard that patients were waiting 2 to 3 hours on trolleys before been seen. She stated that the need to go to hospital was greater and the clinicians were having to work extra hard to ensure that patients received timely and appropriate treatment.

She stated that if ambulances were backed up at hospital, they were unable to attend other calls that was putting people's lives at risk.

The Director of Local Delivery/Head of Integrated Commissioning confirmed that the work on this was underway and the delay in handovers had reduced significantly. She stated that work should be done to support people in the community and reduce the need to go to hospital by enhancing support at home where appropriate.

Councillor Jopling stated that triage in Accident & Emergency had improved but this still needed further streamlining and commented that a number of people in Accident & Emergency were under the influence of alcohol or requiring methadone. She continued that this should be a separate area as it was an unsettling environment to be in.

The Director of Local Delivery/Head of Integrated Commissioning responded that patients were screened in Accident and Emergency department based on the appropriate service that was needed. She stated that space within the emergency department at the UHND was at a premium and the Trust had been developing a business case for a new build, but the site was landlocked and there was little space for reconfiguration although noting that a new Accident & Emergency department would address these issues.

In response to a question from Mrs Gott on the availability of medication for mental health patients the Director of Local Delivery/Head of Integrated Commissioning responded that she would follow this up outside of the meeting but stated at times there was a shortage of some medication.

Councillor Higgins referred to waiting times in Accident & Emergency Departments and the capacity and stated that Peterlee was reduced from a 24-hour service resulting in more pressure on hospitals. He stated that they should look at opening the walk-in centres back up to 24 hours. He then referred to COPD rescue packs that some GPs would not prescribe that resulted in a hospital admission and stated that these packs should be prescribed.

The Director of Local Delivery/Head of Integrated Commissioning responded that she would pick the COPD rescue packs up with GP practices and clinical leads. With regard to the Peterlee Centre, she advised Members that the overnight service they go out to people's homes rather than patients visiting the centre. When this change was implemented, they monitored this and had not seen an increase in people going to Accident & Emergency departments in the areas where the changes were made. She indicated that the ICB was constantly looking at the effectiveness of services and this was something that they were currently looking at to ensure the urgent model was the right one based on people's change in needs and preferences.

Councillor Higgins asked if a report could be brought back to the next meeting on the COPD Rescue packs.

Resolved: That the information contained in the presentation be noted.

7 Health Protection and Assurance Annual Report

The Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and the Director of Public Health which provided Members with an update on the health protection assurance arrangements in County Durham and health protection activities over the course of the year (for copy of report, see file of Minutes).

Joy Evans, Strategic Manager Protecting Health and Jo Darke, Consultant in Public Health, UK Health Security Agency were in attendance to present the report.

Councillor Robson referred to refugees coming to the North East and asked if any medical screening was carried in term of communicable diseases such as measles etc.

Officers assured Members that in the North East they had only had between 70 and 80 confirmed cases of measles, in other parts of the country they were running into the hundreds. This was down to the work that had been carried out to get the MMR vaccination coverage up and stated that the North East do not receive a huge number of refugees in comparison to other areas. When those individuals were dispersed to the area they would register with Primary Care, and they produced a Health Guide that outlined the tests that should be carried out.

In response to a further question from Councillor Robson, Officers advised that if someone did not have evidence of a vaccination then depending on the vaccination it would be administered. Durham County Council were carrying a lot of work with the workforce that met with asylum seekers and they know to direct them into Primary Care.

Councillor Hovvells asked if they had seen an increase in the Dengue Fever.

Officers responded that they had not had any cases in County Durham and indicated that when they see a rise in any infections then UK NHS produces a briefing note so that GPs and Hospital Doctors have the information.

Ms McGee, Healthwatch County Durham referred to Section 8 and the Horden Together partnership that was to be extended that was welcomed and asked what areas this would be and if it would be extended further into the County.

Officers advised that they would take this back to the Head of Community Protection Services for a response.

The Chair referred to Sexually Transmitted disease such as syphilis and gonorrhoea that was not easily picked up and asked if this was a potential problem.

Officers responded that they share information with hospital physicians and primary care. They had also been working with ante natal services to raise their awareness.

Resolved: (i) That the contents of the report be noted.

(ii) That the report provided broad assurance that effective processes are in place for each of the key strands of health protection activity be noted.

(iii) That Members noted and supported the areas for improvement and further assurance, particularly the school-aged immunisation service contract and sexual health contract. Both of these contracts are priority areas of work for improvement, development and assurance.

8 Quarter 4 2023-24 Performance Management Report

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive which presented Members with information about the Council performance with Members, Senior Managers, Employees and the Public.

The Strategy Team Leader was in attendance to present the report that tracked progress towards achieving the strategic ambitions and objectives set out in the 2023-27 council plan. It contained the most recent performance data available on 31 March. Contextual information related to activity and events taking place in the fourth quarter of the 2023/24 financial year (January to March). The report also provided insights into what was going well, and the issues being addressed (for copy of report, see file of Minutes).

The Strategy Team Leader reported that the draft CQC report had been received and an internal benchmarking exercise would be undertaken at the end of the month with other local authorities who had been through the inspection process over the last few months. The final report and results were expected next month.

Councillor Higgins commented that he felt that smoking had reduced but he was concerned at the number of people vaping, in particular school children.

Councillor Robson asked if they were exploring initiatives to allow people to remain in their own homes for longer.

The Strategy Team Leader responded that of the rehabilitation services, usually put in place following Hospital Service Assessment Plans, reablement delivery is currently being reviewed and had been delivered in County Durham through one

organisation. The review found that the provider had a number of staffing and capacity issues through the pandemic that reduced the number of people that were able to use the service. The recent review of the service had identified a number of issues in the way it was delivered, and remodelling of the delivery of the service looked to increase the coverage of the service. In addition to this, for people with more severe needs, they had recently reviewed the delivery of intermediate care plus beds and the number of care homes that offered this service was reduced but the number of beds available had increased, and they had seen an increase in the number of people using this service.

Resolved: That the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter four performance (January to March), and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge be noted.

9 NHS Foundation Trust Quality Accounts 2023/24

The Committee received a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services which informed Members of the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the responses made on behalf of the Committee in respect of NHS Foundation Trust Draft Quality Accounts 2023/24 (for copy of report, see file of Minutes).

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had previously agreed responses to the draft Quality Accounts of County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust; Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust and North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust.

Upon receipt of the respective Quality Accounts, these were circulated to the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee membership for consideration and comment. A meeting of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee was held on 9 May 2024 where representatives of County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust presented information on the performance against the Quality Account priorities for 2023/24 and the proposed priorities for 2024/25.

The Draft Quality Account for North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust were circulated for information and comment to Members of the Committee.

The views provided by Members at the Committee were included in responses to the draft Quality Accounts which also set out the key areas of work that the Committee had undertaken in respect of each NHS Foundation Trust.

In order to comply with the deadline for responding to the Quality Account documents, draft responses were produced and signed off by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and sent to each

Foundation Trust within the mandated timeframe for responses which was 30 days following receipt of the draft Quality Accounts.

Resolved: That the responses to the draft Quality Accounts of County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust; Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust and North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust be noted.

10 Refresh of the Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC Work Programme 2023/24

The Committee received a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services which provided the Committee with a work programme for 2024/24.

Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee review their work programme each year to reflect the objectives and associated outcomes and actions identified within the Council Plan and in the context of the County Durham Vision 2035.

The proposed work programme had been framed around the shared County Durham Vision 2035 based on the three strategic ambitions of 'more and better jobs', 'long and independent lives' and 'connected communities'. The draft work programme also reflected NHS Partner strategies, priorities and actions that have been developed.

The proposed work programme also reflected the refreshed Council Plan adopted by the County Council at its meeting on 28 February 2024.

Resolved: That the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2024/2025 and the flexibility it offers to respond to emerging issues be agreed.