

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a meeting of **Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 1A , County Hall, Durham on **Friday 14 July 2023 at 9.30 am**

### **Present**

**Councillor V Andrews (Chair)**

### **Members of the Committee**

Councillors M Johnson, J Blakey, L Brown, R Crute, M Currah, J Higgins, L Hovvels, P Jopling, C Kay, C Lines, M McKeon, S Quinn, K Robson, M Simmons and T Stubbs

### **Co-opted Members**

Mrs R Gott

### **Co-opted Employees/Officers**

Project Lead G McGee, Healthwatch County Durham

### **Also Present**

Councillors A Reed and C Varty

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Earley, D Haney, L Holmes, J Howey, A Savory and Angela Stobbart.

## **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor L Brown was present as substitute for Councillor D Haney.

## **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **Matters Arising**

Councillor Quinn referred to the matter of oral health which had been raised at the meeting on 11 May 2023 and asked if a response had been received and asked if an officer from oral health could attend a future meeting of the Committee. S

Gwilym, Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that a written response had been received from the Integrated Care Board Chief Executive and he suggested that dentistry be considered as part of the work programme for 2023/24.

G McGee, Healthwatch asked if a response had been received regarding breast screening following the meeting on 11 May 2023. The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that a response was outstanding from three separate trusts and agreed to follow this up.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **5 Any Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties**

There were no items from co-opted members or interested parties.

#### **6 Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028**

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Management Team which presented the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JLHWS) 2023-2028 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The JLHWS is a legal requirement under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to ensure health and social care agencies work together to agree services and initiatives which should be prioritised. The Health and Wellbeing Board has the responsibility to deliver the JLHWS, which is informed by the Joint Strategic Needs and Asset Assessment (JSNAA), as part of Durham Insight, which is an assessment of the current and future health, wellbeing, and social care needs of residents in County Durham.

A Healy, Director of Public Health gave a detailed presentation and explained that the joint strategic needs and assets assessment rooted in intelligence and wider evidence about what drove health and wellbeing across the county. She further explained the vision for the JLHWS '*County Durham is a healthy place, where people live well for longer*' and noted that the JLHWS focussed on areas that could prevent it from achieving this vision. The four priority areas were:

- Making smoking history
- Enabling healthy weight for all
- Improving mental health, resilience, and wellbeing
- Reducing alcohol health harms

Councillor Kay asked for further information regarding the strategy's ability to improve mental health. The Director of Public Health highlighted that this was a

priority area. She explained that the mental health strategic partnership had been refreshed to re-emphasise mental health as an important issue and included information on prevention and fair access to services. Councillor Kay expressed concern regarding the challenges experienced by service users in being referred to a specialist mental health team and requested that updates on the JLHWS be brought back to the Committee to keep members well informed on progress. The Director of Public Health advised that the purpose of bringing the JLHWS to the Committee was to allow members the opportunity to consider the strategy in greater depth and she advised that any concerns raised would be feedback.

Councillor Jopling expressed concern with youth vaping, stressing that the long term side effects of vaping were currently unknown and asked what schools were doing to prevent young people from vaping. The Director of Public Health advised that vaping was part of the work that was being done on tobacco. She explained that vaping was a safer option in comparison to cigarettes and was a great alternative for those trying to stop smoking but she stressed that vaping should not be promoted to young people. The Director of Public Health went on to advise that current legislation regarding vaping was challenging. She informed the Committee that a government consultation regarding youth vaping had recently launched and Durham had submitted a robust response seeking the prevention of advertisement to young people. The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that youth vaping had been agreed as a topic on the workplan for Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CYPOSC) for 2023/24 and assured members of the AWHOSC that they would be invited to meetings when this topic was to be discussed.

Councillor Brown commented that a study had recently been released which stated that vulnerable women in the North East were 1.7 times more likely to die as a result of suicide, addiction and domestic violence and asked how the JLHWS could improve these figures. The Director of Public Health advised that the strategy tackled inequalities and she informed the Committee that a conference was planned to take place locally which would discuss women's health and wellbeing. The Director of Public Health offered to share the outcome of the conference with members.

Councillor Hovvels noted the benefits of opening up community assets and stressed that this must be done in partnership, not in isolation. Councillor Hovvels went on to ask if gambling was included in the strategy as this had increased and whether water fluoridisation had been agreed. The Director of Public Health commented that with regards to community assets, local councillors knew their communities the best. In terms of gambling, the Director of Public Health explained that they had recently been successful for a bid which had led to specific posts being appointed by Middlesbrough Borough Council to target those people affected by gambling but stated that the level of need was currently unclear. With regards to water fluoridisation, the Director of Public Health advised that this was included in the oral health strategy and the responsibility for this was now with the Secretary of

State for Health. She advised that Durham was in a position to fluoridise water rapidly and agreed to keep the Committee updated on this matter.

Members agreed that gambling was a growing concern. Councillor Currah pointed out that most football teams were sponsored by gambling companies which targeted young males. He further stated that some young people chose to play video games rather than interact socially and drink alcohol and whilst this may decrease the level of alcohol consumption in young people, the impact of this lifestyle could lead to an increase in mental health. The Director of Public Health agreed that advertisements for gambling needed to be addressed and explained that the Local Authority were seeking action on gambling and agreed to provide an update to the Committee and to the CYPOSC. In terms of alcohol consumption, the Director of Public Health advised that there had been a reduction in young people but agreed that mental health in young males was a growing concern and explained that the campaign 'now you're talking' encouraged young males and adults to open up and talk.

R Gott, co-opted member expressed concern regarding mental health services at Tees, Esk and Wear Valley (TEWV) and felt that basic duties such as bloods were being missed by staff and explained that some patients did not have an identified case worker. The Director of Public Health agreed to feedback the concerns to TEWV.

With regards to the obesity strategy, Councillor McKeon explained there was growing evidence that mental health was the biggest factor in cases of obesity and in her opinion, mental health was not discussed enough within the obesity strategy. The Director of Public Health highlighted that mental health underpinned all of the priorities and explained that once the JLHWS was in place, members could challenge it and make improvements.

Councillor McKeon went on to state that it was more difficult for those living in villages to take part in active travel and improving the footpaths between villages would be beneficial. The Director of Public Health noted the Physical Activity Strategy and explained that a consultation on enabling active travel had recently taken place to identify what needed to change to allow active travel more easily.

Councillor Varty expressed her appreciation for being able to attend the meeting of the Adult, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (AWHOSC). She advised that the waiting list for a diagnosis for autism and neurodivergent had increased to four years. She stressed that this was not progress and emphasised that long wait times for a diagnosis impacted on children's futures and their parent's mental health. S Burns, Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board accepted that waiting lists had increased since the COVID-19 pandemic but gave assurance that they were working hard to improve this and to provide the necessary support to patients who were waiting for a diagnosis and post diagnosis. The Principal Scrutiny Officer

informed the Committee that neurodivergency was planned to be on the agenda for a special meeting of the Children and Young People's OSC in October 2023 and members of the AWHOSC would be invited to attend.

Councillor Higgins commented that social workers previously had the power to make referrals to the mental health team directly, and in his opinion, this was a more efficient process than the current arrangement of a GP referral. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning explained that extensive work improving access to community mental health services had commenced to ensure that a broad range of support is available. She acknowledged Councillor Higgins comment regarding referrals by social workers and agreed to feed this back.

Councillor Crute noted the various strategies and asked how they all fit together locally and how the voice of the Local Authority could be heard on a regional and national level. The Director of Public Health explained that JLHWS was overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board and one of the roles of the Board was to support partners to focus on the wider determinants of health. She advised that recently, the Health and Wellbeing Board had influenced a questionnaire for the Inclusive Economic Strategy and confirmed that they would continue to embed health and wellbeing with partners. The Director of Public Health explained that she worked closely with a group of directors on a regional and national level and these directors had the ability to influence relevant departments. Councillor Crute welcomed the work by the Local Authority but stressed it was vital to continually voice concerns with inequality regionally and nationally and to get services based on need.

Councillor Quinn commented that it was great to see the JLHWS and she welcomed the intervention by local shops with regards to vapes being ceased. Councillor Quinn went on to express concern in relation to energy drinks and highlighted that some of these drinks contained traces of alcohol. She expressed further concern regarding the cost of non alcoholic drinks in food and drink establishments explaining that there was no incentive for those choosing not to drink alcohol. The Director of Public Health advised that they worked with 'Balance' and agreed to feedback the concerns raised regarding the cost of non alcoholic drinks. In terms of energy drinks, the Director of Public Health confirmed that a great deal of work had been done on this area and advised that trading standards should be informed of any illegal sales.

Councillor Andrews, the Chair praised the great strategy and expressed her thanks to the Director of Public Health.

## **Resolved**

That the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-28 be noted.

## **7 North East and North Cumbria ICB Joint Forward Plan 2023/24 to 2028/29**

The Committee received a report of the Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and Durham County Council which outlined the draft Joint Forward Plan received from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) on the 4 July 2023 (for copy see file of Minutes).

S Burns, Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning gave a detailed presentation and explained that the Joint Forward Plan was a national requirement for all ICBs and partner NHS Trusts covering the period 2023/24 –2028/29. The Joint Forward Plan is aligned to system ambitions, building on existing plans and is delivery focussed and demonstrates how ICBs and the NHS Trusts will:

- Arrange and/or provide NHS services to meet the population's physical and mental health needs
- Deliver the NHS Mandate and NHS Long Term Plan in the area
- Meet the legal requirements for ICBs

The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning advised that there was an opportunity to provide feedback on the plan and members were therefore encouraged to review the Joint Forward Plan and provide comment on its content. The deadline for feedback was August 2023 with the final publication of the ICB Joint Forward Plan in September 2023. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning advised that an annual update would be issued each March beginning in 2024.

Councillor Stubbs noted the first review of the plan was scheduled for March 2024 and asked how members could monitor the success of the plan and if it was possible to view the report before it was submitted to ensure that members were satisfied with the content. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning explained that in terms of the local element of the plan, this could be brought back to the Committee for members consideration, but she explained that there would be challenges to do the same for the regional element of the plan.

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that a Joint Regional Committee existed which comprised all 13 Local Authorities in the region and noted the Chair of the AWHOSC was one of the representatives on the committee. He felt that the Joint Regional Committee were best placed to consider the content of the plan from a regional perspective. Councillor Stubbs agreed and stated that a local report would be the priority for local members.

Councillor Jopling emphasised that the plan must address the current issues with dentistry to ensure those requiring treatment could access it, particularly children. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning explained that dental services were previously commissioned by NHS England but were now the

responsibility of the ICB. She advised that the plan included a section on dentistry and explained that a group met regularly to consider actions that would help resolve the current problems. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning offered to attend a future meeting of the Committee along with an officer from the dental team to provide members with an update on progress but gave assurance that they were acutely aware of the impact dentistry was having on people in the community and on hospitals and they were doing their best to urgently address this.

R Gott asked if people on certain benefits would meet the criteria for free dentistry. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning advised that this needed to be explored further and agreed to raise this with colleagues in the ICB.

Councillor Crute asked if NHS England had transferred the responsibility for dentistry in its entirety to the ICB or if the role of the ICB was in a monitoring capacity. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning confirmed that the ICB was responsible for commissioning dentistry explaining that they held the funding, were responsible for the staff and for ensuring dentistry provision for the population. Councillor Crute commented that moving this responsibility to local communities was a positive step forward. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning explained that whilst there were challenges for the ICB, there was also an opportunity for her to influence and improve the position with dentistry at a local level.

G McGee, Healthwatch stressed that a lack of dentistry provision had impacted on several sectors including mental health, personal finances, antibiotic resistance and mouth cancer and asked if the plan considered the long term impacts of this. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning agreed with all points raised and stated that doctors and hospitals had seen an increase in people presenting with dentistry problems. With regards to mouth cancer, she agreed that this had the potential to increase and thanked G McGee for this helpful feedback.

Councillor McKeon asked if it was possible to have a roaming dentist and optometrist, particularly in rural areas as many families had to travel a considerable distance to attend appointments, and in some cases, this impacted on children's attendance at school. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning agreed to look at this locally but felt that it could be a challenge due to the current absence of dentists.

The Chair asked if all GPs treat dental problems. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning confirmed that whilst there had been an increase in people presenting at GPs with dentistry related problems, she was unsure whether all GPs treated this and agreed to obtain this information from the Local Medical Committee.

In response to a question from Councillor McKeon regarding engagement with schools, the Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning advised that family hubs performed a strong role in providing people with a range of support under one roof. With regards to mental health in schools, she advised that children's mental health was currently being reviewed and explained that the Starting Well Partnership had considered the children's commissioner report and Durham were doing well with investment and waiting times, but currently lacked the plurality of provision. She explained that all services were delivered by TEWV and at present there were not any alternatives to this. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning explained that consideration was being given on how to improve children's mental health provision and schools were at the heart of this.

### **Resolved**

That the Draft Joint Forward Plan 2023/24 –2028/29 be noted and the comments made by members on the Plan be submitted to the ICB as a formal response from the Committee.

## **8 Health Protection Assurance Annual Report**

The Committee received a report of 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 see file of Minutes).

Councillor Crute thanked the Director of Public Health for the comprehensive report and commented that it was positive to see the recovery of screening programmes following the COVID-19 pandemic. He had heard that new screenings for lung cancer were going to be introduced and asked if this would be included in future annual reports and if this screening would be rolled out in County Durham. The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning advised that a pilot for lung cancer screenings had taken place in the Bishop Auckland area and was to expand to the whole of the North East and Cumbria, she offered to provide a briefing note to the Committee to keep members updated.

Councillor Quinn believed that further education highlighting the benefits of vaccines was necessary to ensure that people did not become complacent. The Director of Public Health stated that it was important to understand why some people were complacent and make the vaccination process simple.

### **Resolved**

That the content of the report be noted.



## **9 Adult Learning Disabilities across Durham Tees Valley Update**

The Committee received a presentation of the General Manager (Interim), Adult Learning Disabilities which provided members with an update on Adult Learning Disabilities' Service across Durham Tees Valley (for copy see file of Minutes).

S Halpin, General Manager gave a detailed presentation. She explained that the Trust was commissioned to provide 21 assessment and treatment beds for adults with learning disabilities and was provided from two sites, Lanchester Road Hospital in Durham and Bankfields Court in Middlesbrough. The General Manager explained the pressures on the service and the Improvement Plan that had been developed following the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection.

Councillor Johnson noted that Lanchester Road Hospital had not temporarily closed as planned and asked if it was an option for all services to be provided from Bankfields Court in Middlesbrough once admissions were ready to re-open. The General Manager confirmed that the decision not to close Lanchester Road Hospital in Durham was due to the complexity of need of the one remaining patient and advised that clinically this patient would not benefit from being transferred to the site at Bankfields Court. She agreed that it made sense to rationalise all services to one site until a full team could be recruited and stated that a model to re-open had been considered with the possibility of all services being sited at Lanchester Road Hospital.

In response to a further question from Councillor Johnson, the General Manager explained that many patients at Bankfields Court were ready to be discharged but there was not anywhere for them to move on to and this had contributed to the closure to new admissions.

Councillor Jopling advised that she had visited the site at Lanchester Road Hospital in Durham earlier in the year and was satisfied that the necessary improvements had been made. She further advised that she had been impressed with staff and their exceptional care and appreciated the pressures with recruitment in finding the right people. She noted that security at the site was good and described it as an uplifting place with beautiful grounds.

R Gott asked if there was an emergency strategy in place for unavoidable admissions. The General Manager explained that the priority would be for a member of the specialist health team to work with the person in their own home and keep them well at home and this would include supporting their families. If the person required hospital admission, she explained that they would be admitted to TEWV mental health services on a green light admission. As a last resort, an out of area placement would be considered if necessary.

Councillor Currah asked for clarification on the ratio of staff to patients. The General Manager advised that ratios were dependent on the patient's level of need

and stated that they currently had patients who required a high ratio, some being 7:1. She explained that once patients moved on, the service would have the opportunity to re-model and reasonable staffing levels should return.

In response to a question from Councillor Stubbs, the General Manager advised that the CQC had completed a full inspection of all TEWV Services in April 2023 and that follow up actions for the service would be identified in the final report, but she was hopeful that the report would confirm that the service rating had improved.

The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning added that they worked closely with colleagues within TEWV and needed to assess what was required in terms of accommodation going forward including the possibility of self-contained flats for those in crisis. The General Manager advised that an event was soon to take place that would involve a range of professionals and one of the topics to be discussed was blockages and barriers with regards to discharge.

## **Resolved**

That the content of the presentation be noted.

## **10 Q4 2022-23 Performance Management Report**

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive which presented members with an overview of progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework and highlighted key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes. The report covered performance in and to the end of quarter four, 2022/23, January to March 2023 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Crute noted the reduction in the completion of care act assessments and stated that this needed to be monitored. With regards to social care, Councillor Crute advised that members of the CYPOSC had raised concerns with the volume of cases children's social workers were responsible for and suggested that caseloads for adult social workers may need to be monitored.

S Tracey, Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager explained that they had received feedback from services which indicated that engagement with the service user had been completed in a timely manner but complex elements around the social work process had taken longer to complete and this had been complicated further by the introduction of a new case management system. The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager advised that children's social workers had a different model to adult social workers, noting that children social workers focussed more on safeguarding whereas adult social workers had more service users and focussed on consolidating care.

Councillor Jopling commented on safeguarding and wanted reassurance that users were not turned away despite the high case loads experienced by social workers. She also asked if recruitment had improved. The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager explained that recruitment for adult social workers was improving but it was still difficult to fill some roles in the service.

## **Resolved**

That Committee noted the following:

- The overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter four performance
- The continuing impact of COVID-19 pandemic recovery and the external international factors driving inflation and cost-of-living on the council's performance
- The actions being taken to address areas of underperformance including the significant economic and well-being challenges because of the pandemic and other external factors.

## **11 NHS Foundation Trust Quality Accounts 2022/23**

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which informed members of the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (AWHOSC) of the responses made on behalf of the Committee in respect of NHS Foundation Trust Draft Quality Accounts 2022/23 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that the AWHOSC 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 AWHOSC membership for consideration and comment. A special meeting of the AWHOSC was held on 11 May 2023 where representatives of County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust; Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust and North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust presented information on the performance against the Quality Account priorities for 2022/23 and the proposed priorities for 2023/24.

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.

### **12 Refresh of the Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC Work Programme 2023/24**

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided the Committee with a work programme for 2023/24.

AWHOSC 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 Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that the proposed work programme had been framed around the shared County Durham Vision 2035 and also reflected the 'long and independent lives' strategic ambition therein. The draft work programme also reflected NHS Partner strategies, priorities and actions that had been developed.

Overview and scrutiny work programmes are designed to be flexible to accommodate items which may arise throughout the year. Flexibility was particularly important as the work programme was extensive and needed to accommodate issues that may arise during the term of the work programme.

Councillor Crute suggested dentistry be added to the work programme for 2023/24 and agreed that it was helpful for the work programme to build in a level of capacity to deal with any emerging issues.

Councillor Jopling agreed that dentistry was a good topic for the forthcoming work programme.

## **Resolved**

The Committee:

- Received and commented on the proposed Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC work programme for 2023/24
- Agreed the Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC work programme for 2023/2024 and the flexibility it offered to respond to emerging issues
- Agreed the addition of dentistry to the work programme