

## **Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee**

21 January 2022 – At a virtual meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee held at 10.30 am Virtual meeting with restricted public access.

Present: Cllr Wall (Chairman)

|               |                   |                |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Cllr Bence    | Cllr Nagel        | Cllr Bangert   |
| Cllr Atkins   | Cllr O'Kelly      | Cllr Bevis     |
| Cllr A Cooper | Cllr Patel        | Cllr Loader    |
| Cllr B Cooper | Cllr Pudaloff     | Cllr Pendleton |
| Cllr Forbes   | Cllr Walsh        |                |
| Cllr McGregor | Katrina Broadhill |                |

Apologies were received from Cllr Burgess and Cllr Peacock

Also in attendance: Cllr A Jupp and Cllr Lanzer

### **26. Declarations of Interest**

26.1 In accordance with the code of conduct, Cllr Pudaloff declared a personal interest in item 6, Financial Assessments Improvement Programme, as a user of Adults' Services.

### **27. Urgent Matters**

27.1 No urgent matters were raised.

### **28. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee**

28.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2021 are approved as a correct record and are signed by the Chairman.

### **29. Responses to Recommendations**

29.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes the responses to recommendations made at its 26 November 2021 meeting.

### **30. The Impact of COVID-19 on Access to Dental Services**

30.1 The Committee scrutinised the impact of Covid-19 on access to dental services taking into account reports by NHS England (NHSE) and Healthwatch West Sussex (copies appended to the signed minutes).

30.2 The Committee expressed concerns around finding an NHS dentist, getting appointments, treatment backlog, fluoridation rates, meeting targets, training, recruitment and retention of dentists,

dental practices closing, distribution of money from closed contracts, the link between poorer areas and poorer dental health, the wider impact on health due to lack of dental care, what to do when NHS practices close and the prohibitive costs of private dentistry and felt that it was essential that website information was kept up to date to ensure residents were able to find a dentist when required.

### 30.3 Summary of responses to committee members' concerns: -

- The Cabinet Member for Public Health & Wellbeing promised to share the 2018 West Sussex Oral Health Needs Assessment in Children and Young People report with the Committee and said that the Council had a responsibility to monitor the standard of the dental health within its area through needs assessments and could commission dental public health services
- Fluoridation was not an area covered by NHSE
- Money from discontinued contracts was returned to NHSE for reinvestment in dentistry - temporary contracts were offered to fill gaps until services were recommissioned
- NHSE was not involved in the recruitment, training or retention of dentists – Dental Contract Reform was being looked at by the Department for Health and Social Care and would cover these issues
- Dental Contract Reform would also cover establishing a body to look after patients if their NHS dental practice closes
- NHS England helped GPs with signposting people to where they could get dental treatment
- Dental practices were prioritising those with urgent need to minimise the number of people going to A & E for dental reasons
- The funding offered to most dental practices is based on historical claiming profiles - some earning lower amounts have terminated their contracts for financial reasons – NHSE is not able to increase contracts and payments without an associated increase in activity
- There is no target to look at the backlog of dental work
- Patients can look for NHS dentists via the NHS UK website, but this relies on dental practices keeping their information up to date
- NHSE had embarked on a commissioning programme to increase access to dentistry in West Sussex before the pandemic
- A practice in Haywards Heath had increased its contract and temporary contracts were in place in other areas with work continuing to increase capacity in the county

### 30.4 Resolved – that

- i. The 2018 West Sussex Oral Health Needs Assessment in Children and Young People report be circulated to the Committee
- ii. The West Sussex Oral Health Needs Assessment in Children and Young People report be refreshed
- iii. That Democratic Services explores whether data on fluoridisation rates in West Sussex is available to the Committee

- iv. The Chairman writes to the relevant Secretary of State to highlight the need to address the national shortage of dentists and what work can be undertaken in terms of incentives to encourage people to become dentists
- v. The Cabinet Member for Public Health & Wellbeing or the Health and Wellbeing Board, to assess how he/it can be involved in Dental Contract Reform
- vi. The Cabinet Member for Public Health & Wellbeing/NHS to provide information to the Committee on the state of dental health in West Sussex and what is being done to address this through prevention work
- vii. NHS England to provide the Committee with a plan to address the backlog of dental appointments

### **31. Financial Assessments Improvement Programme**

31.1 The Committee scrutinised the Financial Assessments Improvement Programme taking into account reports by the Interim Deputy Director of Finance and Healthwatch West Sussex (copies appended to the signed minutes) and a verbal contribution from Cllr Milne who said that the increase in people's contribution towards the cost of their social care and support package had caused distress and was difficult for vulnerable people to afford. He suggested that in future any proposed increase of e.g. 20% should trigger an automatic investigation.

31.1 The Committee's raised the following concerns/comments: -

- The impact on individuals of the application of Disability Related Expenses (DRE)
- The impact arising from the reduction in the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) despite financial assessments not being completed
- Use of out of date disability data
- The Improvement Plan needed to ensure it prioritised a personalised approach with the need to see demonstrable improvement within a clear timescale that delivered against the priorities for improvement addressing the Committee's comments

31.2 Summary of responses to committee members' concerns/comments: -

- The Council is implementing a national charging regime which generates approximately £60m, a fundamental part of the Council's Adults' Services budget
- Without charging there would have to be reductions in services
- Managing the financial assessment process has to be transparent and clear with improved communication and information
- Reviews of financial assessments not being carried out in a timely manner has contributed to the problems arising – the review of financial assessments reflected within the report has addressed this and timely reviews will be an on-going priority of the improved service.

- Challenges exist in terms of maintaining up to date information about individual's financial circumstances, which emphasises the importance of improving communication.
- DRE is an integral part of the financial assessment and as such is something that can be explored, discussed and resolved as part of finalising the assessment and the assessed contribution.
- The Minimum Income Guarantee is an integral part of the financial assessment and is applied as appropriate on an individual basis.
- Decisions about what is included as DRE are linked to the care and support assessment of an individual. There is a separation of duties applied to ensure that there is no conflict of interest and to support consistency in application.
- The approach to assessing DRE will be part of the review of the ASC Charging Policy that is currently being undertaken.
- The Council recognises the need to provide more public information and transparency about the application of DRE.
- The Council has dealt with complaints openly and encouraged people to use the appeals process if they had any concerns about the outcome or accuracy of the financial assessment.
- Complaints have primarily been about outcomes, not the assessment calculation
- The Government has announced that it will increase the value of the MIG in 2022/23
- When services were insourced, it was clear that there were capacity and management issues that needed to be addressed
- The Council Plan describes the budget and what services will be provided
- On 1 February the Cabinet will discuss the long-term view of adult social care
- The Council recognises that services have to be efficient and people centred and is committed to these priorities
- The customer journey is underpinned by the statutory guidance relating to charging for adult social care nationally
- Engagement of carers and customers is imperative and is reflected within the priorities for the Improvement Plan
- The Council took a balanced view on when new charges should apply, waiving or capping increases between April 2019 and January 2021 in recognition of delays experienced by individuals and the service improvements required.
- All financial assessments are undertaken on the basis of identifying what an individual can afford to contribute towards the cost of the care and support they receive - where people are in hardship the Council will discuss their situation with them
- There was no evidence of any ongoing specific issues relating to social care assessments

31.3 The Cabinet Member for Adults' Services appreciated the complex nature of the changes to the MIG and financial assessments and was sorry for the stress caused to some people. She said that the Council had engaged with customers and partners over the Adults Strategy and would continue to try to improve its services.

31.5 Resolved – that the Committee supports the recommendations from Healthwatch, as follows: -

- i. Mandatory disability awareness training for all financial assessment staff by the end of the first quarter of 2022/23 that provides learning to improvement practice and communication
- ii. The Council Quality Assurance process is extended to include the end of the customer journey for Adult Social Care, including case audits of staff twice yearly.
- iii. Community organisations that support people who may or receive adult social care are given an appropriate level of information/ training so they can support people going forward
- iv. Communication and written resources are co-produced with Healthwatch and relevant community partners and people who may need adult social care in the future by the end of this financial year

and requests that: -

- v. A survey be co-produced with customer input to go out to people affected by the change in charging policy to get their opinions and to see if there are any outstanding issues
- vi. A progress report to be brought to the Committee in September on the Financial Assessments Improvement Plan
- vii. Data to be provided to members on how many people are affected by the review of financial assessments
- viii. Future work on the Adults' Social Care Strategy ensures effective engagement takes places with residents
- ix. Case studies be provided to residents to better understand the new process

## **32. Work Programme Planning and Possible Items for Future Scrutiny**

32.1 The Committee considered its work programme taking into account the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and suggestions from members.

32.2 Resolved – that the Business Planning Group consider proposals in the Adults' Strategy as topics for future scrutiny.

## **33. Requests for Call-in**

33.1 The Committee noted the outcome of the call-in request relating to residential based in-house services - Marjorie Cobby House, Selsey decision (CAB07 21/22).

**34. Date of Next Meeting**

34.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 7 March 2022.

The meeting ended at 1.25 pm

Chairman