
Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

22 November 2023

Update on the delivery of the two-year improvement programme 2023-25 to assist the delivery of the Adult Social Care Strategy 2022-25

Report by Director of Adults and Health (DASS) and Assistant Director – Improvement and Assurance

Summary

On 15 September 2023 the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) considered a report that set out the detail of the first iteration of Adult Social Care's self-assessment in preparation for Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance. Within that self-assessment document were a number of areas for improvement, which had been identified for delivery as part of the directorates two-year improvement programme. The delivery of this programme is being supported by the council's transformation fund, which was agreed in early 2023. It was agreed that regular updates would be presented to the Committee to update on progress for the improvement programme.

The improvement programme is being delivered during a period of significant challenge, which includes the need to support our NHS partners in the facilitation of discharging patients from hospital, as well as manage increased demand for adult social care. Workforce recruitment and retention issues remain key for the council, as well as independent and voluntary sector providers, with the fragility in the care market together with increasing prices across the whole care sector.

Ongoing management oversight of the capacity required has been planned and resourced for the improvement programme during 2023/24 and 2024/25, with the procurement of fixed-term external capacity to support delivery. Roretti Ltd were appointed as the service's delivery partner for a two-year fixed term period from 1 July 2023, to provide additional resource to support the business throughout the improvement programme duration.

Focus for Scrutiny

The Committee is asked to consider the update on the delivery of the two-year improvement programme.

Key Lines of Enquiry include:

Key areas for the committee to consider and comment on are:

1. The content of the improvement programme workstreams, taking into consideration the Council's strategic ambitions and the complexities currently facing adult social care.

2. The linkages with the content of the adult social care [self-assessment](#) recently considered and discussed by the Committee;
3. How the committee intends to discharge its scrutiny responsibility to support service improvement by identifying specific parts of the improvement programme for future scrutiny, if required.

The Chairman will summarise the output of the debate for consideration by the Committee.

Background and Context

1. Strategic focus for Adults Social Care

Adult Social Care Reform

- 1.1 A recent letter from the Minister of State for Social Care sets out plans to implement commitments made in the People at the Heart of Care white paper, through innovation and new models of care to respond to rising demand and the changing needs of the population. West Sussex is cited as an area of good practice for services that reach out to, and involve, unpaid carers through the discharge process, as Carers Support West Sussex has a reach-in service which provides a 'light touch' assessment of the carers with a focus on immediate support needs. An Innovation and Improvement Unit has been established to develop and define clear priorities which make person-centred care and support a reality for people who use services across adult social care, and which re-affirms a commitment to spend up to £25m to commence a change in services to support unpaid carers, although it is not yet known how the £25m will be distributed or applied.
- 1.2 In respect of other areas of adult social care reform, charging reform is on pause following the Chancellor's autumn budget statement last year. Although the introduction of a 'fair rate for care', as well as allowing self-funders to ask their local authority to arrange care on their behalf together with access to the 'fair rate of care' is delayed, work is continuing to enable people to access our services through improved online self-assessment tools, that will help manage the increasing demand for assessments we are currently facing as well as provide a more responsive and timely service to our customers. In addition, expected guidance on carers, housing and information and guidance is still awaited.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance

- 1.3 The service has prepared the first iteration of its self-assessment in preparation for CQC assurance and this was considered by the Committee on 15 September 2023. The self-assessment sets out areas which the service is proud and areas for improvement, which are included in this report as part of the two-year improvement programme.

- 1.4 Initial formal assessments were expected to begin in September 2023 however the CQC announced this would now be later in the year, although a further update on this is still awaited. It is expected all initial formal assessments for all local authorities will be completed within two years from the point in which the CQC begin assurance visits. The CQC's longer-term approach to regular ongoing assessments is also awaited.

Adult Social Care Strategy (2022-25)

- 1.5 Work to deliver the 'we will' commitments in the Adult Social Care Strategy (2022-25) and support the delivery of all aspects of our Council Plan (2021-25) is central to the changes and improvements that are required. Opportunities to co-design and co-produce with customers and partners is included as part of the directorate's ongoing programme.

Embedding strength-based working and managing demand

- 1.6 Adult social care in West Sussex is embedding a strength-based approach to practice, which emphasises people's self-determination and strengths, being client-led, with a focus on future outcomes and strengths that people bring; and reflects the priorities as set out in the West Sussex Plan and Adult Social Care Strategy 2022-25. The service refreshed its approach to strength-based working by introducing common forms across all the assessments completed within the directorate. As part of embedding the new forms the opportunity was used to review practice, this has led to the setting up of a Strength-based Oversight Group across operational teams to monitor, reflect, review, and standardise practice across all customer areas. The aim is to support all practitioners to understand not only strength-based working, which is primarily how we interact with customers, but how the directorate expect and evidence what strength-based working means locally, providing tools and information to support staff.
- 1.7 This and other smaller working groups are actively supported by operational managers, focusing on reflective practice, celebrating the work of staff by sharing examples which reflect the voice of the customer, their strengths and what they want to achieve so we learn from each other, quality assuring and auditing the work of staff to understand and improve recording, changing the system when there is a clear need and a governance group which links back into the operational teams that can provide clear communication, leadership and opportunities for continuous improvement.
- 1.8 However, as this approach is more time consuming to undertake it is having an impact on the numbers waiting for assessment and review, in addition to the impact of ongoing demand. Specific challenges within the lifelong services area of the business, in relation to the time taken to not only undertake a review but also to make alternative arrangements when a change in care setting is deemed appropriate, are also contributing to workload pressures across operational teams.
- 1.9 Waiting times are being managed in several ways which include the production of work prioritisation guidance to support teams to consider risks and Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rate referrals, with teams undertaking focused triage days every couple of months to scrutinise waitlists and resolve referrals if

individual circumstances have changed. In addition, most teams do regular focussed weeks to review waiting times and where possible, close referrals or make onward referrals to other preventative services. Duty practice guidance has been updated with an additional focus on triaging, with an emphasis on resolving issues and considering other resources to address needs. Additional locum resource is being utilised where possible, as well as a consistent voicemail for all teams to allow duty workers to have periods away from the phones, so they have more time to address referrals. Resources will be deployed from the recently announced Market Sustainability Improvement Fund (MSIF) to support actions to manage operational team waiting times. This is in addition to work within the improvement programme to improve the Council's preventative service and information, advice and guidance offer to address demand and waiting times.

2 Adult Social Care (ASC) Improvement Programme 2023-25 update

Assistant Director for ASC Improvement and Assurance

- 2.1 Julie Phillips was appointed to the new fixed term role of Assistant Director for ASC Improvement and Assurance in June 2023 and is now overseeing the shaping and delivery of change over the two-year period and is managing the relationship with the external delivery partner, as well as internal stakeholders to deliver the changes needed.

Delivery Partner appointment – Roretti Limited

- 2.2 As set out in previous reports, the nature, scale and complexity of the improvement plan means that fixed-term external capacity and skills are needed to work alongside in-house teams to deliver core workstreams. The service requires support of additional experienced social care commissioners; senior programme/project leads to drive forward change, who understand working in social care and with the NHS, as well as local authority finance; and design/change management leads. All workstreams within the improvement programme also require business and data analyst support, as well as co-production support, which will be overseen by the Assistant Director – Improvement and Assurance in partnership with the Council's Adult Social Care leadership team.
- 2.3 Following an Open procurement process, Roretti Limited was selected as the preferred bidder, with a bid that met the specification and demonstrated awareness of the aims and objectives of the overall programme when evaluated against set criteria, which included quality and commercial elements with a focus on cultural alignment working with the Council's values framework.
- 2.4 The contract is based on agreeing individual Statement of Works (each with its own aims, objectives, deliverables, price and payment profile), with performance overseen by the Assistant Director Improvement and Assurance, with monthly contract monitoring meetings and weekly informal contract touch-in meetings.

Delivery of the programme to date

- 2.5 Work delivered throughout 2022/23 and early 2023/24 supported by transformation funding provided the foundation for the further improvements and service development planned within the programme. The improvement programme is using these foundations to design models of care and support that are focused on meeting the needs of people who need adult social care support.
- 2.6 Based on the work to date, the programme is split into seven workstreams as detailed in the attached presentation, which include:
- Customer journey
 - Strategic commissioning
 - Practice and operations
 - Finance and systems;
 - Workforce and organisational development
 - Performance and intelligence
 - Systems partnership working
- 2.7 Communications and change and CQC assurance readiness are included as overarching workstreams. The delivery of these workstreams is being overseen by the Adults Portfolio Board – Improvement and Assurance, chaired by the Assistant Director – Improvement and Assurance. Due to uncertainty and risk within adult social care, it is recognised that there will be a need throughout the programme to re-focus the content over the two-year period.

3. Risk implications and mitigations

- 3.1 Significant risks remain in the demand for adult social care and waiting times, as set out in point 1.8. The management of these are crucial to ensure that the County Council is fulfilling its statutory duties under the Care Act 2014, especially with upcoming CQC assurance. Mitigations continue to be in place to address some of the risks in the short term, however the recruitment of good quality locum social workers is an ongoing risk for the delivery of financial savings in respect of undertaking reviews across operational teams.
- 3.2 Corporate finance colleagues in the delivery of the financial assessment improvement programme will continue as business as usual activity, which although sits outside this programme there are links to within the finance and systems workstream. This work remains a risk for the directorate and its interdependency with the proposed customer journey redesign.
- 3.3 The level of demand for ASC, workforce challenges, the ongoing requirement for the delivery of savings, market sustainability, safeguarding and the ongoing support from the County Council to the NHS remain. These are all part of the rationale for investment to ensure that required improvements can be delivered in the necessary timescales.

- 3.4 Staff and resources deployed to support the use of the recently announced MSIF, are the same as those which are currently delivering the programmes of work as detailed in the report. There is therefore an ongoing risk that key strategic actions may not be delivered due to the reprioritisation of staff, resources and services to deliver the outcomes required from the MSIF investment, which need to be evidenced by the end of March 2024.
- 3.5 While strong progress has been made over the past two years, the work involved to deliver savings, prepare for inspection and ASC reform, and deliver business as usual remains significant. It is crucial that the programme of work to improve adult social care in West Sussex continues to support the wider progress that the organisation has made in the past three years.
- 3.6 Recruitment and retention of staff remains a significant challenge for adult social care and the new workforce strategy, with underpinning action plan will support the management of this over the next few years. Due to the impact on staff of the work of the improvement programme, CQC readiness and budget and savings management, a range of communications have been introduced, with the opportunity for two-way engagement across all teams, in order to support all staff during the next few years.

4. Contribution to achieving our Climate Change Strategy

- 4.1 Through the change opportunities afforded by proposed new models, new services and service redesigns within Adults and Health, we will contribute fully to the corporate ambitions on climate change, to be a net zero carbon organisation by 2030 and transforming how we work.
- 4.2 Climate Change has been embedded in all project documentation managed by the Programme Management Office and reviewed by the ASC Portfolio Board.

5. Finance

- 5.1 The Council's net budget for adult social care in 2023/24 is approximately £242m, which has risen by 24% over the last five years. Around 95% of this relates to the cost of funding the social care needs of approximately 8,500 residents who meet the national eligibility criteria in the Care Act. The Council has also committed £8m of additional funding to deliver the improvement programme over the next two years.

6. Policy Alignment and Compliance

- 6.1 The improvement programme will assist in the delivery of the Adult Social Care Strategy which sets out five priorities to guide the future development of adult social care services within the context of the Council Plan.

7. Our Council Plan

- 7.1 Developed from the County Council's reset plan in 2020/21, 'Our Council Plan 2021-2025' sets out the council's priorities over the next four years and the outcomes to achieve for people who live and work in West Sussex. The focus is on four priorities, which are:
 - Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations

- A sustainable and prosperous economy
- Helping people and communities to fulfil their potential
- Making the best use of resources

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications.

9. Equality Duty and human rights assessment

9.1 The service is on a journey to move from an Equality Act compliance focus to one which embodies inclusion and truly person-centered services and support. Key decisions taken include an assessment of any equality implications of proposals and how, if necessary, these will be mitigated for people with protected characteristics. The long-standing Adults' Services, Customer and Carer Group, the Minorities Health and Social Care Group and the Learning Disability and Autism Partnership Boards meet regularly and serve as critical friends to the service.

10. Public Health

10.1 Adult Services works in close partnership with Public Health and the voluntary and community sector and other partner agencies to increase the range of options open to people to support their wellbeing, as well as reaching people earlier before they require adult social care services.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Improvement Programme slides