

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of **the IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PEOPLE** held on 04 November 2020

PRESENT

Councillor G Musson (in the Chair)

Councillors J Coyle, R Flatley, J Frudd, R George, R Iliffe, D Taylor and J Twigg.

Also in attendance – Councillor A Dale, H Henderson-Spoors and J McGarry.

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors C Dale and R George.

24/20 **MINUTES RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 02 September 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

25/20 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS** There were no public questions.

26/20 **DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE - IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS AND CHILDRENS SERVICES** Councillor Alex Dale gave an update to the Committee and outlined the impact of Covid-19 on Derbyshire schools and Children's Services.

Schools had responded well to the Covid-19 pandemic. Councillor Dale paid tribute to all of the school staff across the County for the work that had been done since March 2020. Derbyshire County Council felt it was important to keep the schools open but to provide innovative ways of delivering education.

Schools had demonstrated good practice in keeping in touch with pupils at home during the March lockdown and for any pupils now having to self-isolate. In the months leading up to the summer holidays schools had been encouraged to focus on preparing for blended learning and this had paid off as they had been able to effectively deliver blended learning as and when required.

New systems had been put in place to protect pupils, teachers and parents. Schools had been discouraging bus use to reduce the numbers to allow for successful social distancing measures. As well as this, additional buses were being commissioned and staggered start times had been introduced.

There were occasions where ‘bubbles’, year groups or entire schools were having to close due to self-isolation rules. It had been difficult to deliver curriculum during these periods and that was one of the bigger concerns of teachers.

Children’s Social Care Teams had adapted quickly to the Covid-19 pandemic. Councillor Dale paid tribute to all of the staff for the speed at which they had introduced fundamental changes to their working practices. There was more remote contact but, where required, in person meetings continued with full PPE or window visits. The staffing levels remained strong with the potential impact of staff shortages being of greatest concern within children’s homes.

Social care referrals declined during the first lockdown by approximately a third but have since returned to previous levels. However, health service referrals remained below their pre-pandemic proportions. There was concern that latent demand might build up within the system and that the service might be overwhelmed. The situation was being carefully monitored.

Members were given the opportunity to make comments or ask questions which were duly noted or answered.

The Chairman, on behalf of the committee, thanked Cllr Dale for his comprehensive and informative report.

27/20 EXPERIENCES OF VIRTUAL APPOINTMENTS DURING COVID-19 – HEALTHWATCH DERBYSHIRE

Helen Henderson-Spoors from Healthwatch Derbyshire presented the report. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been a significant rise in the use of digital services in place of face-to-face services, such as telephone appointments, video consultations, text messaging and others.

This project was conducted to help provide an understanding of where virtual appointments may not have met the needs of patients and to shine a light on the reasons as to why people may not have engaged with appointments virtually. The report also included where appointments did meet the needs of patients and the key areas in which virtual appointments met people’s healthcare needs.

From August to September 2020, 118 telephone interviews were conducted with residents from both Derbyshire and Derby city who had experienced virtual appointments, as well as those who hadn’t accessed this type of appointment. People were asked about their access to and confidence with technology, their experiences of booking a virtual appointment and if the method of appointment suited their needs.

This report would be shared with stakeholders across Derbyshire including Joined Up Care Derbyshire, the NHS Derby and Derbyshire Clinical

Commissioning Group, Derbyshire County Council, NHS services and voluntary sector colleagues, to highlight what worked well during the pandemic and what could be improved.

The information collated would be used to help inform the decision-making process on how best to operate services in the future. Once a response to the report had been received it would be available to view on the Healthwatch Derbyshire website.

Whilst the majority of participants had accessed a virtual appointment, the thoughts and experiences as to why people may not have been willing or were unable to access an appointment in this format identified two key areas: Virtual appointments not being suitable due to a desire for in-person human interaction. This was evident in certain responses from people with a learning disability, mental health condition, or aged 75+. Participants unable to access a virtual appointment sought care elsewhere or did not receive the healthcare they may have required.

Virtual health appointments relied on patients having access to technology. Depending on the method of appointment this ranged from needing a telephone to requiring a device with a camera and access to the internet of sufficient speed to be able to live-stream video. Participants that did have access to technology also needed to be confident on how to operate it for their appointment to take place

What did not work well:

- Access to technology;
- Confidence in ability to operate technology;
- Privacy and data protection.

Many participants experienced issues in the process leading up to the virtual appointment taking place. Communication breakdown and a lack of patient input as to when appointments took place were key themes that caused issues for patients accessing virtual appointments.

Participants that had a positive experience of booking their virtual appointment often found it met their needs and was a more effective process than they had experienced when accessing healthcare services before the pandemic.

What did work well:

- The time between booking an appointment and the appointment taking place;
- Information before and after virtual appointments;
- Pro-active communication and response to individual patient needs;
- Online booking systems.

The method of virtual appointment was not always deemed as being appropriate for meeting the healthcare needs of participants. Assessing certain physical conditions and relaying diagnosis or advice to patients virtually were issues, whilst reservations around security and privacy were also highlighted.

Whilst virtual appointments may not have met the needs of all participants there were many positives experienced that were preferable to patients accessing healthcare services in-person. These positives had been outlined in the report.

Participants also shared their thoughts on appointments that they felt should always take place in-person for which a virtual appointment would not be a suitable alternative. As well as what they felt could have improved the experience of a virtual healthcare appointment. Whilst many suggestions correlated with issues already highlighted in the report additional areas for consideration were raised.

28/20 THE SCRUTINY REVIEW The Scrutiny Review commenced in 2019 at the request of Cabinet and Chairs of Scrutiny and a workshop was held for the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the four Improvement and Scrutiny Committees. A lack of officer capacity prevented the review from being progressed further at that time, and, to resolve this, a Programme Director was appointed in March 2020 to progress a range of projects, including the scrutiny review.

It had been determined that the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) were to be commissioned to undertake the review, bringing independence, a substantial experience of scrutiny from across the country and a ready-made scrutiny review methodology. As part of the review process the CfPS undertook two member surveys: one designed for completion by members of Cabinet and members of Improvement and Scrutiny Committees and the other designed for all remaining members. CfPS also carried out a series of one to one meetings and discussion groups with key officers and Elected Members across the authority.

A Scrutiny Review Steering Group was established to lead the review. The Steering Group comprised of the Improvement and Scrutiny Chairs and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services. It was supported by the Executive Director, Commissioning, Communities and Policy and the Programme Director.

Cabinet considered the Scrutiny Review findings and proposed actions at their meeting on the 8th October 2020 and approved the Scrutiny Review Report, including recommendations and the draft action plan, for consideration at a scrutiny member workshop and by the four Improvement and Scrutiny Committees and Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee. Cabinet

noted that this review commenced a programme of continuous review and development of scrutiny at Derbyshire County Council.

The Scrutiny workshop took place on the 12th October 2020. Four Member Break Out Groups, supported by CMT and Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officers considered the Scrutiny Review findings, Action Plan and the following three questions:

- What were the key findings of the review that you believe are the top priorities?
- What were the opportunities and risks to effective implementation of the action plan?
- What does success look like in 12 months' time?

The final Scrutiny Review report, action plan and the consultation feedback would be considered by Cabinet on 19th November for approval and recommendation to Council on 2nd December 2020.

Fifteen recommendations were identified by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), as set out in their report: Derbyshire County Council Scrutiny Improvement Review, July 2020, and a further three actions were identified by senior officers and the Scrutiny Steering Group.

The Scrutiny Steering Group had prepared a draft Action Plan in response to the recommendations. The CfPS recommendations appeared as sections 1-15 and the additional recommendations could be found in section 16 of the Action Plan.

RESOLVED that the Committee (1) note the Scrutiny Review Report and commend it to Cabinet prior to consideration at full council; and (2) note the proposed programme of continuous review and development of scrutiny at Derbyshire County Council.

29/20 **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY** Julie Vollar, Service Director Commissioning & Performance gave a presentation to the Committee on the assistive technology being used within Adult Care.

There were many different products currently in use but more innovative products had been designed to improve the way care was being delivered across the County. New technologies were being developed to move the authority from being analogue based to digital.

New artificial intelligence such as GPS trackers were a great example of new technology being used to assist residents. The authorities aim was on the outcomes produced not the technology itself. The ultimate goal was to get the technology correct to be able to support independence.

The authority wished to join forces with the district and borough authorities to merge the knowledge and technology together to create one place for residents to be able to get the information they may need. These discussions were underway.

There were a number of pilot programmes happening across the county to be able to support those who needed it with the help of new technology. The Canary Care Monitoring System was an example of this, this technology was being used to support those living with dementia to live alone after being discharged from hospital.

30/20 OVERSIGHT OF NEXT STEPS IN RELATION TO DIRECT CARE HOMES FOR OLDER PEOPLE - PROGRESS REPORT

On 4th June 2020 Cabinet received a report on the outcome of the consultation on the proposed closure of seven, and the refurbishment of three, Direct Care homes for older people.

The working group was mindful that property condition surveys conducted in 2019 reported that some of the Council's Homes for Older People were in poor condition and highlighted that 12 homes required rewiring. This included the 7 homes previously proposed for closure, the 3 homes proposed for refurbishment plus 2 homes (Ada Belfield, Belper and Hazelwood, Cotmanhay) where decisions had already been made to close once local alternative had been established. Therefore, Members considered it a priority to ascertain the effectiveness and durability of the mitigation measures in place to address any increased risk associated with the need for properties to be rewired.

Members met with the Direct Care Group Manager on 25 August 2020 and were advised that a comprehensive risk evaluation had been undertaken to establish whether the homes were safe and what mitigating actions were required. The key elements of the risk evaluation had been outlined within the report.

Members welcomed the detailed briefing about the mitigation measures. However, they wished to explore further issues relating to the emergency lighting systems in some of the homes, following the statement that "improvements to emergency lighting cannot be undertaken as this requires the homes to be rewired". Therefore, a further working group meeting was held on 9 September with the Electrical Operations Manager and the Head of Projects (Design and Build) from Property Services, to consider in more depth the implications of buildings needing to be rewired. A fundamental question that Members sought an answer to was, Are the homes equipped with emergency lighting systems that would facilitate the safe evacuation of residents in the event of an emergency?

After having the opportunity to vigorously question officers from Adult Care and Property Services, Members of the working group agreed that they felt assured that the mitigation measures in place were sufficiently robust and durable to address the increased risk associated with the properties that had been identified as needing rewiring, in the near future. It was also agreed that the working group would continue to pursue the other key lines of enquiry regarding its role in overseeing the next steps in relation to direct care homes for older people. A briefing that took place on 25 August 2020 from the Direct Care Group Manager about the proposed approach for identifying suitable and local provision, and a briefing on 2 September 2020 from the Service Director about the methodology to assess current and future demand for residential care and the preparation of a Market Position Statement had been received. The working group was now awaiting an update on the timeframe for this work and how it was progressing.

RESOLVED that the Committee (1) agreed that an interim report was submitted to Cabinet confirming that the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – People, was assured that the mitigation measures in place were sufficiently robust and durable to address the increased risk associated with the properties that had been identified as needing rewiring, in the near future; and (2) note that the scrutiny working group would continue to pursue the other key lines of enquiry regarding its role in overseeing the next steps in relation to direct care homes for older people.