

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, ADULTS AND HEALTH COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee held in the Luttrell Room, County Hall, Taunton, TA1 4DY, on Wednesday 8 September 2021 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr H Prior-Sankey (Chair), Cllr M Healey (Vice-Chair), Cllr A Bown, Cllr M Caswell, Cllr P Clayton, Cllr A Govier and Cllr B Revans

Other Members present: Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr D Huxtable, Cllr M Keating, Cllr A Kendall, Cllr C Lawrence, Cllr T Munt, Cllr C Paul and Cllr L Redman

Apologies for absence: Cllr J Lock and Cllr G Verdon

15 **Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 2

There were no new declarations.

16 **Minutes from the previous meeting held on 07 July 2021** - Agenda Item 3

The minutes were agreed.

17 **Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 4

There were no public questions.

18 **Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee Work Programme** - Agenda Item 5

The Committee considered and noted the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions in forthcoming months including Cabinet meetings.

The Committee agreed to add the following items to the Work Programme: -

- Access to Emergency Dental Services and NHS dentists generally. The request was that a Somerset Dentists be represented at the meeting so the Committee can understand the specific challenges.
- The impact of the Health and Care Bill on Somerset residents.

The Committee also confirmed that Musgrove Park Hospital and Yeovil District Hospital changes should remain on the Work Programme for January or February next year. The also agreed that the legislation on Deprivation of Liberty should remain on the Work Programme as new legislation is still expected.

19 **Stroke Services - Consultation** - Agenda Item 6

The Committee had a report that set out the proposals to improve Stroke care in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) and were invited to consider the impact on Somerset residents. The proposals for improving Stroke care centred on the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire population. The impact of the proposals on Somerset providers has been assessed as part of extensive capacity and demand modelling and has been assessed as less than one additional patient per week being treated at Musgrove Park Hospital. The Committee were informed that it had been a longstanding ambition of the BNSSG Healthier Together Partnership to improve stroke services and outcomes for everyone in its area. The Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Stroke Programme Board – made up of people with lived experience of stroke, senior clinicians and staff – has worked together over a number of months to redesign stroke services in line with national standards and ensure that more lives are saved each year.

The proposed model for BNSSG centralises hyper acute care for stroke patients at a single site in Southmead Hospital, which will have a “hyper acute stroke unit” (HASU) and become a “Comprehensive Stroke Centre” under the new National Stroke Service Specification. Rehabilitation is a key Under the proposed changes many people will be supported directly home from hospital supported by a new integrated community stroke service (ICSS). For a small number of patients from North Somerset whose acute care is transferred by these proposals to Musgrove Park Hospital capacity has been modelled and planned for continuation of care within the BNSSG Sub-Acute Rehabilitation Units and further rehabilitation at home. The modelling has also demonstrated that less than one Somerset patient currently treated at Weston General Hospital will be affected by the proposed changes to Stroke care. These patients will benefit from transfer to the centralised specialist emergency care at the proposed HASU at Southmead.

The Committee discussed the proposals contained in the report and the following points were made: -

- Some Committee members had personal experience of Stroke Services and agreed that rehabilitation close to the patients home was invaluable and the proposed changes would not alter that which was welcomed.
- The Committee had nothing but praise for the current Stroke services in Somerset and welcomed the centralised expertise offered by the proposal.
- The Committee sought reassurance on the critical time limit on getting Stroke patients to the right place for treatment and were assured that the guidance was for that time to be no longer than 60 minutes but the modelling for the proposal had been based on 45 minutes and there was confidence this could be met in all cases. There was a question about the use of Air Ambulances and the appropriateness of this for Stroke

patients and it was agreed this would be investigated and the Committee would have a separate response.

- The Committee asked about priority access for Stroke patients to MRI scans and again it was agreed that this would be answered following further investigation.

The Somerset Scrutiny for Policies Adults and Health Committee: -

Considered and commented on the proposals regarding the future of Stroke Services in the north of the County.

20 **Adult Social Care - Performance Report** - Agenda Item 7

The Committee had a report that set out the challenges the pandemic has placed on Adult Social Care over the past year. The pandemic has reminded all of the importance of collaboration, communities, and of the care, support and protection of those who need some help the most. It has served to demonstrate why adult social care work is both vital and valuable. But it has also served to demonstrate the fragility of the sector, with COVID-19 adding significant additional need, activity and challenges to an already over-stretched and under-resourced set of services and support for old and disabled people over the course of the past year and a half. The report was intended to update the Committee members on key information in relation to demand and performance activity across adult social care, as well as associated risks and mitigation plans.

In Somerset, there is growing evidence of 'carer breakdown' where families have coped without respite during the worst of the pandemic but are no longer able to carry on without assistance. Additionally, the inter-dependence of social care and the NHS has never been starker, with the Local Authority supporting growing numbers of individuals either awaiting hospital admission or being discharged from hospitals, with increasing numbers going on to have a social care package of support. 'System pressures' right across health and care sector services and organisations, particularly over the summer period, has meant there is a lot of reactive urgency to our work, with little additional time, capacity or resource to proactively plan. There are also well known and long-standing challenges across the sector in relation to pay, recruitment, retention and turnover in care, highlighting the importance of a long-term national workforce plan. Care market sustainability is a continued concern and vital in mitigating risks of unmet care need within local communities and from hospital.

The report set out in some detail the challenges across the sector. These covered: -

- Increased demand for care and support,

- A concerning reduction in the number of Adult Safeguarding reports coupled with an increase in the reporting of 'self-neglect',
- More complex needs requiring Intermediate Care and Discharge to Assess cases and
- An increase in demand for home care from independent providers.

The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2021 (the "Regulations"), make it mandatory for those working in care homes to have the Covid-19 vaccination. This requires all staff to be double vaccinated by 11th November 2021. The report set out the current position in Somerset which showed that on current vaccination rates there may be up to 717 staff members in care homes who have yet to be vaccinated. There may be many reasons why staff are not yet vaccinated; maternity leave, sickness or concerns over the vaccine.

The report did make it clear that against the background of all these challenges Somerset has been nominated for three Achievement Awards for:

'Best Workforce Transformation' for its redeployment work during the pandemic,
'Community Heroes' for the work of Community Council for Somerset's Village and Community Agents, and
'Delivering Better Outcomes' for Somerset's Micro-providers, independent care providers who have proved a lifeline for the county's more isolated and rural populations throughout the pandemic.

The live awards take place in London on 17 September 2021.

The Committee welcomed the honesty of the report accepting the demands placed upon Adult Social care generally and exacerbated by the challenges of the pandemic. The Committee wanted to know if there was anything they could do to encourage the take up of the vaccine in care home staff. The Committee wanted to acknowledge the range of support being offered to Somerset residents and the dedication and commitment of staff in the Care Sector.

The Committee were concerned about the number of people waiting for a care package. They were informed that these people were not isolated at home awaiting the package half were in Hospital and the remainder in Community Hospitals with reablement care ongoing. The reality was they could be moved back to their home or out of Hospital if that care package was in place. Individual cases where things appeared to have gone awry were raised and it was agreed that it would be more appropriate to inform the relevant director of these instances and allow for individual investigation.

The Somerset Scrutiny for Policies adults and Health Committee: -

Considered and commented on the report and recorded their thanks for all the hard work undertaken by those supporting those needing some form of care.

21 **Supporting Unpaid Carers in Somerset** - Agenda Item 8

The Committee had a report and presentation on unpaid carers in Somerset. There are 58,000 people who have identified themselves as carers, there are many more who are not known to the Council. Somerset County Council commissions a broad range of support services for carers. These services are currently commissioned by Adults & Health and Children and Young People and delivered by several different providers. It is important to make sure that these services continuously improve to ensure that they are meeting carers needs now and into the future. It is the ambition of the County Council to involve carers and partners to help to understand what is working well and where there is a need to further develop services and practices in order for carers to get the right support they need at the right time.

In December 2019 a workshop was held to involve Scrutiny Committee Members to help us co-design a Carers Transformation Programme. This enabled them to hear about commissioned services for carers and benefited from hearing about the experiences of a carer (Alison Birkett) who articulated very well the frustrations and concerns that carers can face on a day-to-day basis. The event led to the launch of the Carers Transformation Programme and a plan of carer engagement was about to get underway, but unfortunately had to be put on hold due to the Pandemic.

The Somerset Carers Service (provided by the Community Council for Somerset - CCS) provided online carers groups, a dedicated helpline and a website for carers. They also worked closely with colleagues from SPARK Somerset to develop in excess of 70 community support groups across the County, many of which were providing vital support to carers in their neighbourhoods. During the Pandemic CCS also extended the role of all their Village Agents and Carers Agents to ensure carers are supported by all (not just the five assigned carers agents) which meant there were a total of 63 agents who supported over 8,000 carers during the critical months of the Pandemic.

The Carers Transformation Programme has been reviewed and re-developed into The Somerset Carers Continuous Programme which will be an ongoing plan of activities that will be designed and delivered in partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group our contracted service providers and carers. The aims of the Programme are to:

- Continue to improve internal practice and processes consistently provide good outcomes for carers as well as the cared for,

- Review Carers Voice Somerset to ensure that it is effective in carer engagement,
- Seek continuous improvement through the contract with Community Council for Somerset who deliver the adult carers service,
- Develop working agreements between adults and young carers services to ensure that young adult carers through transition get the support that they need,
- Develop new ways to support carers to ensure that services are flexible and gives the carer choice and control and
- Deliver wider promotion of carers support services so that carers know where to go for support when they need it.

The Committee were shown four case studies that brought to life the real difference made by the collaborative work of the Somerset Carers Engagement Service and the various partners.

The Committee welcomed the follow up to the workshop in 2019 and commended the positive outcome from a productive event. The Committee agreed that the changes made, such as the expansion of Village Agents and that having been in place for a while was noticeable how their expertise had grown and the positive difference this makes on the support they can give. The Committee wanted assurance that this transformation also had a positive impact on young carers and in particular the transition between the two services. The Committee wanted encourage Village Agents to make contact with Parish, District and County Councillors since this would further consolidate the support being offered and may open up further avenues of support.

The Somerset Scrutiny for policies Adults and Health Committee:

Considered and commented upon the report and endorsed the aims of the Carers Continuous Improvement Plan.

22 Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 9

There were no other items of business.

(The meeting ended at 11.50 am)

CHAIR