

Adult Care and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Monday, 15 March 2021, Online - 2.00 pm

		Minutes
Present:		Mrs J A Potter (Chairman), Mrs M A Rayner (Vice Chairman), Mr R C Adams, Mr A Fry, Mr P B Harrison, Mr R C Lunn and Ms S A Webb
Also attended:		Mr A I Hardman, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Martin Gallagher, Healthwatch Worcestershire Paula Furnival (Strategic Director of People), Rebecca Wassell (Assistant Director - Commissioning), Hannah Perrott (Assistant Director - Communities and People), Kerry McCrossan (Service Manager), Pauline Harris (Head of People Programmes), Sarah Cox (Principal Social Worker), Samantha Morris (Scrutiny Co-ordinator) and Jo Weston (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)
Available Papers		The Members had before them: A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated) B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 January 2021 (previously circulated). (A copy of document A will be attached to the signed Minutes).
385	Apologies and Welcome	The Chairman welcomed everyone and confirmed the arrangements for the remote meeting. Apologies had been received from Mr T Baker-Price and Mr P Grove.
386	Declarations of Interest	None.
387	Public Participation	None.
388	Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting	The Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.
389	Update on	The Strategic Director of People, Senior Officers and the

People and Communities Strategy and Workstreams

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care had been invited to provide an update on the Strategy for People and Communities following the Panel's initial discussion on 18 November 2020.

The Strategic Director reminded Members that the People Directorate had been formed in early 2020, bringing together services including commissioning for both adult social care and services for children, community services and Public Health.

The People and Communities Strategy was aligned to the Corporate Strategy, with the aim to review and ultimately provide, with partners, a universal service with good outcomes for everyone within the financial envelope, in particular targeting those with additional needs and those eligible for public funding. The Transformation Programme had been through the Council's recent budget process.

The Strategy would be delivered across a number of workstreams, organised into three Pillars:

- Person Centred Approach
- Shaping Services
- Shaping an Effective Market.

The Head of People Programmes reported that the Transformation Programme was now well established, focussing on the improvements which the Strategy would deliver despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. There was increased innovation and People Directorate colleagues had worked hard to keep the momentum. Progress made included:

- The tender for domiciliary care had been advertised. Its aim was for provision of reablement focussed domiciliary care and reducing the number of individual providers, currently over 100, into lead providers for each of the six districts
- Remodelling work for day opportunities for people with learning disabilities was developing well, with stakeholder, carer and service user engagement currently in progress
- Building upon the success of Here2Help, the Integrated Wellbeing Offer programme would create a sustainable long-term future operating model, connecting local communities and services
- Agreement had been reached to develop three Dementia Meeting Centres in Worcester, Tenbury

and Malvern.

Referring to the direct provision of adults mental health social work, in particular the Council terminating the Section 75 agreement with Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust and the provision being brought in house from 1 April 2021, the Chairman reported that she had been made aware that the Trust had raised concerns and invited the Strategic Director to comment. In response, the Strategic Director reported that there was ongoing correspondence between the Council and the Trust, that the agreement had been in place since 2005 and that the Trust had concerns over the ending of the agreement. In addition, discussions were taking place outside of the Panel to establish whether there was a need for Scrutiny involvement.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were raised:

- In relation to the Integrated Wellbeing Offer, it was reported that engagement had commenced with the voluntary and community sector. When asked what this entailed, it was explained that there were two pillars; the focus on action required now and what may be the requirements in the longer term. In addition, how best to embed the learning from the response to COVID-19
- Further information was sought on the 'Lifecurve App', which Officers agreed to provide
- Members welcomed the funding for the development of the Dementia Meeting Centres, with some Members referring to other local programmes such as Dementia Cafes. Officers reported that the aim was to have nine centres across the County and that it would be a rolling programme. Member engagement was welcomed, especially for local opportunities and Officers agreed to circulate further information
- It was acknowledged that transport costs were high, with the Strategic Director reporting that an Officer had recently been appointed to review a more sustainable future for travel
- For clarity, given the number of projects ongoing, the Strategic Director explained that the overall Strategy was spilt into 3 pillars:
 - Person Centred Approach – services

**390 Review of
Funding
Arrangements
between the
Council and
Herefordshire**

- tailored to individual need
 - Shaping Services – the need to align with Council vision and ensure value for money and services which were fit for purpose
 - Shaping an Effective Market – adapting to change and working with partners
- In relation to the use of Direct Payments, it was noted that uptake in Worcestershire was slightly below the national average of 27%, with the Strategic Director stating that evidence suggested that people felt more in control when used, hence the ambition to increase the number. Furthermore, opportunities were available for groups to collaborate funding to stay together and participate in valuable opportunities
- A Member asked how successful recruitment had been to the care role opportunities available, to be advised that there were no current issues locally. Work was ongoing to promote care as a career across the whole system
- Joined up commissioning was of some concern, especially in light of integrated care systems being developed nationally. Everyone agreed that there were interesting times ahead
- Use of residential/nursing care was an area of concern. Some Care Homes were reporting vacancy rates of over 20% and across the County, the vacancy rate was currently 24%. A number of the COVID-19 block contracts were due to end which may reduce income further. It was anticipated that future arrangements would not operate as they did currently and there would be a refocus of the use of the sector, however, further discussion was required.

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member and Healthwatch Representative to comment, however, with nothing to add, thanked all those present for a useful discussion and requested that the Panel schedule an update in due course.

The Service Manager provided the Panel with an update on the progress made in relation to the review of the funding arrangements between Worcestershire County Council (the Council) and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (HWCCG).

**and
Worcestershire
Clinical
Commissioning
Group**

For context, it was reported that the Council had a need to ensure that funding arrangements were appropriate and allocated fairly and that the review supported the promoting independence element of the Directorate Strategy.

The Council had engaged with a health economy partner, Liaison Care, to undertake the review and its findings would feed into the development of the project alongside providing benchmarking information to gauge where Worcestershire sat in comparison to other local authorities.

There were 3 specific areas under consideration:

- Continuing Health Care (CHC) – a national framework was in place to determine whether an adult had a primary health need. If assessed as such, the NHS was responsible for commissioning a care package which met both health and social care need. Continuing Care for Children was another national framework, with 2 children in the County receiving this
- Joint Funding – people with a learning disability, physical disability, older people or those with a mental health need who were assessed as not eligible for CHC could be assessed for potential joint funding if they had health and social care needs. 117 people were currently in receipt of joint funded care packages
- Section 117 Mental Health Act Funding – often referred to as section 117 aftercare, some people who were kept in hospital under the Mental Health Act were entitled to free support after they left. In Worcestershire, the Council and HWCCG agreement was that funding would be split 50/50% for people with mental health needs and 100% Council funded for people with Learning Disabilities. The Worcestershire model of funding did not follow a national framework.

Liaison Care had already analysed data and held meetings with Council Teams. An initial meeting between Council Officers and HWCCG Leaders had taken place to outline the project and the next stage was to develop an engagement plan.

The overall objectives were to ensure that funding arrangements were appropriate, that the process was as simple as possible and that national best practice was followed. Officers believed that the review was a real

**391 Care Act
Easements as a
Result of
COVID-19**

opportunity for collaboration with HWCCG, although it would take some time to review and confirm with the respective executive boards.

The Chairman believed the review would be valuable and asked that the Panel be kept updated, with Officers agreeing to provide updates throughout the process, including sharing the engagement plan when available. In response to a question on initial thoughts from the HWCCG, it was reported that a meeting had taken place to outline the project to them and that this was the beginning of the engagement process.

The Principal Social Worker outlined the background to Care Act Easements by reporting that they were introduced under the Coronavirus Act 2020, with national guidance published in March 2020. The purpose was to ensure that the best possible care was provided during the COVID-19 pandemic and, if enabled, the easements would enable adult social care to streamline certain assessments, such as assessments in relation to care and support needs and finance, in order to prioritise those in most need.

No easements were available in relation to wellbeing duty, provision of information and advice, duties in relation to advocacy or safeguarding. Furthermore, decision making had to remain person centred and consider human rights.

The guidance set out a threshold for enacting easements, which would have to be approved by the Strategic Director with involvement from the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care. The Health and Wellbeing Board and the Clinical Commissioning Group would also have to be updated.

Worcestershire County Council did not enact the easements, however, nationally, seven local authorities (five within the West Midlands) did enact the easements between March and July 2020. Those local authorities had subsequently reported that significant anxiety was caused to their residents. A national review was underway and regionally, it was thought that the Care Act flexibilities could perhaps have sufficed instead of the easements.

Since 3 July 2020, no English Local Authority had enacted the easements.

The Principal Social Worker commended the dedication

**392 Work
Programme**

and hard work of the Social Work Teams and strongly believed that their contribution had helped the Council not to enact the easements and ensure that residents' Rights were always met.

On behalf of Members, the Panel Chairman asked that their thanks be passed on to the Social Work Teams. The Panel agreed that it was very positive that Worcestershire had not had to enact the Care Act easements as the threshold had not been met.

Members agreed to add two Items to the Work Programme for consideration by OSPB on 17 March:

- An update on People and Communities Strategy and Workstreams
- An update of Funding Arrangements between the Council and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group.

The meeting ended at 3.10 pm

Chairman