

ADULT CARE AND WELL BEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 24 MARCH 2023

LEARNING DISABILITY OPERATIONAL SERVICES

Summary

1. The Adult Care and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Panel has requested an update on changes within Learning Disabilities Operational teams and how they will impact service provision, areas for improvement and progress to date.
2. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care and the Strategic Director and Senior Officers from the Directorate of People have been invited to the meeting to respond to any questions the Panel may have.

Background

3. Until February 2019, the Learning Disability Service (LDS) was delivered by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (HWHCT). In March 2019, this service returned to Worcestershire County Council (the Council). The LDS supports over 1400 adults with a learning disability within Worcestershire who have identified care and support needs. It consists of two teams located in the north and south of the county. Each team is led by an Area Manager and the teams include Advanced Practitioners, Social Workers and Social Care Workers.
4. In addition, a Vulnerable Adults Team (VAT) supports around 120 adults aged 16 to 25 who have Autism, associated conditions and learning difficulties. This service has been subject of a review to consider the benefits of an 'all-age' model.
5. The Young Adults Team, is now part of the All-Age Disability Service, delivered by Worcestershire Children First (WCF), in which Adult Social Care commissions support for young people with a range of disabilities aged 16 to 25 years.
6. Adult Services retained the VAT to enable further work, considering the development of Autism services and now have robust plans in place now to build this into an Autism and learning difficulty service.

Peer Challenge Outcome

7. In December 2019, the Council was subject of a peer challenge programme with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS). A key line of enquiry was to look at the effectiveness and efficiency of the LDS which, at that time, consisted of two Learning Disability Teams, a Young Adults Team, and Vulnerable Adults Team. This included a review of practice, examining cases from service areas.

8. Several areas of development were identified:
- Joint working in relation to NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) funding and decision making/agreement on a joint strategy with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) on the funding of individual packages.
 - Development required in terms of strength-based practice for the service.
 - Development of joint understanding of the funding responsibilities related to an individual with a learning disability discharged from a Mental Health Section 117 (S117) aftercare.
 - Co-production needed to be strengthened.
 - Whether there was an understanding across the Council and partners of the spend and demand pressures faced from the increasing complexity and demand for people with learning disabilities and autism.

Progress since ADASS Peer Challenge Outcome

9. Joint working has continued with the ICB to develop a memorandum of understanding for NHS Continuing Healthcare and formal agreement for joint funding arrangements.
10. The CHC Partnership Working Policy is in place which outlines the dispute process.
11. For the Transforming Care cohort (people who are in or have been admitted to a secure mental health hospital), S117 now includes a 60/40 split agreement for individuals with a learning disability subject to S117 funding. There is a S117 policy, and Dynamic Support Register (DSR) which is kept by HWHCT and monitors individuals at risk of admission to an acute Mental Health Hospital. Staff attend regular meetings with HWHCT to proactively review and monitor this list.
12. For admissions to Acute Mental Health Hospitals for Adults with Learning Disabilities and Autism, the Council is within the required targets set by NHS England and have 4 people in locked rehabilitation and 7 people in secure settings, with these people monitored regularly. There are a few challenges around suitable community providers that are skilled to meet forensic needs and risk management. This is under review via the complex need's framework review. Also, the new policy is being implemented and commitment regarding the DSR needs to be further strengthened by system commitment.
13. The LDS has made real strides in the development of strength-based practice. For the last 12 months and prior, the service has consistently achieved over 90% for staff who have been awarded a rating of good over better in Proud Conversation, the Council's current audit tool. These audits include a huge consideration of how strength-based practice is.
14. In terms of co-production, the LDS has a long-established partnership with the Learning Disability Partnership Board and Autism Partnership Board which includes multiple agencies and most importantly, experts by experience. The service is working with both Boards to develop the updated Learning Disability and Autism strategies.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) Self-assessment

15. As part of the on-going work around preparation for CQC inspection, Adult Social Care is in the process of developing a robust quality assurance framework for practice. The LDS has been the subject of a robust self-assessment to prepare for the upcoming CQC inspection of adult services. There is a thorough self-assessment plan which incorporates a number of actions including the need to have access to specialist training, and key pathways to be developed with partners to be able to access timely specialist support as and when required.

Named Worker Progress

16. The LDS introduced the named worker approach to allocations. This is nationally recognised best practice and aims to create meaningful relationships between individuals and their families, and professionals involved. This results in the allocated worker working pro-actively with the person, provides a consistent approach to safeguarding, court of protection work, multi-agency work including CHC and S117. The worker is then able to respond promptly to changes in need and is a consistent person for care providers to liaise with.
17. The service is in the process of providing all individuals with a named worker, with the opportunity to review with individuals and families, how the named worker approach is working, and this will inform improvements or provide the opportunity to celebrate good practice. So far, frontline staff have been feeding back on its effectiveness, and we are seeking to extend the feedback to families, providers, and other professionals.
18. The named worker approach is a huge strength for the LDS, it has been established in the South of the County initially, and there has been recent investment into the North to operate this model. Senior Officers will continue to monitor this approach as it is dependent on their being adequate staffing within the service which will be kept under review.

Learning Disability Review Project

19. In 2022, the People Directorate Leadership Team (PDLT) agreed investment for an external agency to complete a backlog of outstanding reviews for the LDS. PDLT had previously recognised the proportion of staffing the LDS received when the Central Review Team disbanded was not sufficient for the demand and had agreed some additional posts. However, there was a backlog and vacancies in staffing, impacting on the ability of the service to be able to achieve good review performance. The external agency has supported the LDS to improve the annual review position. Currently, the review performance for the Learning Disability Service is at 90.5% against a target of 95%, the review project will cease in May 2023. The service will then need to ensure that it is able to meet the demand of the reviews going forward in a timely manner.

Commissioning Conversations

20. Joint working with the Commissioning Team is a real strength of the LDS. Currently, there are weekly 'commissioning conversation' meetings with the Team and frontline staff to look at high-cost support packages. These meetings are vital to support with ensuring best value and high-quality services for people

new to the service and people who continue to receive services after their annual review. The meetings and joint working also support strategic commissioning, enabling early planning of services based on current trends and future predicted need.

Transitions

21. The transition of young people into the service from WCF continues to strengthen. The LDS continues to receive referrals from the Young Adult's Team via the existing arrangements. The Vulnerable Adults Team receives transitions for young people, those with autism and learning difficulties from WCF Throughcare Service which sits outside of All-Age Disability. There are operational meetings with both teams to ensure transitions are timely ensuring people have an effective and smooth transition to adulthood, enabling Adult Social Care (ASC) to also manage and forecast the budget effectively.

Pathway Planning Team

22. In 2022 a new social work team was established to work closely with commissioning on ensuring individuals with Learning Disabilities, Autism and Mental Health needs are accessing the most appropriate services for their needs. This team is supporting with re-modelling and re-negotiating services as well as supporting with moves to more appropriate forms of support.

Social Worker of the Year Awards 2022

23. Last year, a member of staff from the LDS south team, was nominated for Newly Qualified Social Worker of the year. This is a nationally recognised award for exceptional Social Worker's and teams, and it is a significant achievement to be nominated.

Co-production

24. The LDS South Team publishes a newsletter which it shares with people who use the service to ensure key updates are shared and we are in the process of developing this in the north too. The service continues to have good links with Speakeasy N.O.W. and regular engagement with experts by experience via the Learning Disability Partnership Board. ASC is strengthening its overall approach to Co-production via the creation of the Building Together Forum, which will launch soon.

Recruitment and Retention

25. In line with national shortages of Social Workers and other neighbouring Councils, recruitment and retention are a key challenge for the LDS. Progress has been made with recruitment, but the Council faces particularly a challenge in the north team which neighbours other authorities such as Birmingham and Warwickshire. To address this, the service is moving towards a 'grow your own' model whereby it supports Social Care Workers to take up the offer of applying for the Social Work degree training, which the Council offers and encourage students on placement and newly qualified staff to remain with the team and develop into the future experienced social workers.

Vulnerable Adults Team Review

26. The Vulnerable Adults Team is the current offer for people with a learning difficulty or autism aged 16-25 and is a very small service. For people with those conditions who are 25 years and above, support is provided by the Area Social Work Teams. To provide a more robust and consistent offer, work has been done to review the service and create an offer with better outcomes for people that is future proof based on growing demand.
27. There is an on-going review to consider potential changes towards a different offer for Adults with Autism and Learning difficulties. The ambition is that this would also include a transition function for individuals with autism and associated conditions and completes assessments for people who are 18+ with a diagnosis of autism and learning difficulty.
28. Potentially changing the service in this way could provide ASC with a consistent and robust offer, and cases of this nature could be transferred from Area Teams to be part of the Adult and Autism service where staff will have specific skills and knowledge for this area of work. There is also an excellent opportunity to grow this service in conjunction with the upcoming Autism strategy. The ambition for the service will be to operate a named worker approach to allocations, in a similar fashion to the LDS. The need for such a service can be seen in the table below which outlines the growing population of individual living within the county with Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

Projected number of people aged 18-64 with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Worcestershire, 2020-40

	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
18-24	420	410	456	472	448
25-34	687	690	658	674	730
35-44	676	730	777	782	749
45-54	821	755	746	801	849
55-64	802	875	856	791	788
18-64 total	3,406	3,460	3,492	3,520	3,564

Source – PANSI projections of people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

29. The number of people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Worcestershire is projected to increase from 3,400 in 2020 to almost 3,600 in 2040, an increase of over 150. The 45-54 age range is projected to have the highest number of people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in 2040.

Case Studies

30. Mr X has come through to ASC for a re-assessment and increase in his support due to an increase in behaviours associated with his diagnosis of Autism and a Severe Learning Disability. Mr X is at risk of admission into a Secure Mental Health Hospital for Learning Disabilities. The Multi-Disciplinary Team are working together to ensure that an admission is prevented, and an assessment is urgently completed so that support can be enhanced to reduce the likelihood of an admission. Completing an assessment will allow for an exploration of the best

value services to meet need. The individual has a named social worker, which means their assessment can be completed promptly by a professional who knows them well. Delaying the re-assessment will lead to an admission into an acute Mental Health (MH) setting, this would also create strain on the ambulance service due to the conveyance required, and there are delays currently with ambulance responses known to the system, this would increase the risk further should Mr X be waiting for transportation to hospital and continue to be in an acute MH crisis.

31. Miss P has Autism and has come through as an assessment request for the current Vulnerable Adults Team as a transitions case. This transition to Adult Services is required now that Miss P has turned 18. The request for Adult Service to assess has come from WCF, and an assessment is needed urgently to determine Care Act eligibility. Miss P is currently in a placement and has complex needs. It is important for Adult Services to complete a timely assessment to determine eligibility and apply a best value approach to the support provided. Adult services need to complete a timely assessment to ensure risks are managed post 18 and the right care provider is meeting needs safely in a cost-effective way. Delaying this assessment will mean that Miss P could have been supported to live in a more independent setting, but instead will remain where they are until a suitable alternative setting can be found. A timely assessment also gives commissioning a good opportunity to find suitable services for young people to promote their independence.

Key Future Priorities

32. LDS key priorities include:

- To retain and recruit staffing into the team to ensure the named worker approach to allocations can continue.
- To transform the current Vulnerable Adult service into a service with a focus on Autism and Learning difficulties.
- To embed the requirements identified within the CQC self-assessment for the Learning Disability service.

Purpose of the Meeting

33. The Panel is asked to:

- Consider and comment on the information provided
- Determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

Contact Points

Emma James / Jo Weston, Overview and Scrutiny Officers, Tel: 01905 844964 / 844965
Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Francesca Darby, Head of Learning Disabilities, Tel: 01905 846894
Email: fdarby@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director of Legal and Governance), the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and Minutes of the Adult Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 15 November and 28 January 2021
- Agendas and minutes from Cabinet on 22 July and 4 February 2021 and 22 October 2020

All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.