

## **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

At a meeting of the **Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF on Tuesday, 3 July 2018 at 1.00pm

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor J Watson  
(Chair, in the Chair)

#### **COUNCILLORS**

Cessford, T.  
Dungworth, S.  
Horncastle, C.  
Nisbet, K.

Rickerby, L.J.  
Simpson, E.  
Seymour, C.

#### **ALSO PRESENT**

Jones, V.

#### **OFFICERS**

V. Bainbridge

Executive Director of Adult Social Care  
and Commissioning

M. Bird

Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Complaints and Customer Relations  
Manager

J. Hillery

K. Thompson

Rights Team Manager

#### **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

D. Nugent

Healthwatch Northumberland

C. Riley

Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust

E. Robertson

NHS Northumberland Clinical  
Commissioning Group

S. Young

NHS Northumberland Clinical  
Commissioning Group

One member of the public was in attendance.

#### **23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Foster and Moore.

#### **24. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing OSC held on 5 June 2018, as circulated, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to being amended to record that Councillor V Jones was also present.

## **25. DISCLOSURES OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

The Chair referred to Councillor Nisbet raising that she might have had a declarable interest in relation to the Primary Care Applications Working Party's recent deliberations, but that it had been clarified that it did not preclude her from participating.

## **26. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

Members received the latest Forward Plan of key decisions (enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix A). It was noted that there currently no items within this committee's remit.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **27. CABINET REPORTS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE COMMITTEE**

Members were reminded that the committee had pre-scrutinised the 'Extra Care and Supported Housing Strategy' report at its last meeting on 5 June 2018 prior to it being determined by Cabinet. Cabinet then agreed the report's recommendations and noted this committee's report at its meeting on 14 June 2018. An extract from the Cabinet minutes were presented for information (copy attached to the official minutes as Appendix B).

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY**

### **28. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

#### **28.1 Customer Experience: Joint Children's and Adult Services Customer Experience: Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2017/2018**

The report informed members of the committee of the activities of the Children's Social Care and Adult Services complaints service, including work on behalf of the Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group. (Report attached to the official minutes as Appendix C.)

The item was introduced by the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Commissioning, following which the Complaints and Customer Relations Manager provided a detailed overview of the report, which included: the activities of the Children's Social Care and Adult Services complaints service, including work on

behalf of the Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group; how customer experiences were sought and to provide an overview of what people had said about the services; how complaints were handled and statistical information from 2017/18; matters of general note arising out of those complaints including some examples where action had been or was to be taken in order to improve services; decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Health Service Ombudsman in respect of complaints they received about children's and adult services; and other feedback from people who used the services.

Key details of members' questions and responses from officers during the ensuing discussion were as follows:

Regarding the report's reference to the single point of access receiving one thousand calls per day, members were advised that previously there had been between 26 -29 different numbers to report to, but they had now all been consolidated into one, which received calls also from adult and children's social cares services, GPs, hospitals and others. All calls were received through the triage used by the multi-agency safeguarding hub.

Members were further advised of the rebranding for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Complainants could take their concerns there if unsatisfied with how the Children's Social Care and Adults complaints service had addressed them. Each Ombudsman decision during 2017/18 had been reproduced in the report. Numbers were slightly higher than the previous year but issues were dealt with quickly. The report detailed future plans and a business plan regarding aims.

A member commented that none of the Ombudsman cases had been serious over the past year, and it was also the case that if the complaints service recognised a mistake and took action to rectify, the Ombudsman was not critical.

A member referred to how 71% of complaints had been upheld fully or partially, the importance of avoiding any complacency, and issues raised regarding communication with staff and customers, plus any cases of staff underperformance despite receiving the required training. Members were advised that there was certainly no room for complacency and any concerns raised were addressed. Team managers raised any issues that needed addressing; many discussions took place about how to address issues and why complainants did not get the services they wanted. Service users were supported to raise concerns. *Members were advised that* although 71% of complaints had been fully or partially upheld, only a small number of actual complaints had been received. There were human resources processes for disciplinary action or even dismissal if any staff members' performance was poor.

In response to a further question, it was confirmed that the increase in the number of complaints was anticipated as previously complaints had been received more widely across the organisation rather than through the current one route, and all complainants received a response. It was also easier now for people to complain and access this service.

Members agreed that it was a very comprehensive report and it was:

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report and members' comments be noted.

## **28.2 Welfare Rights Annual Report 2017-18**

The report updated members about the activities of the Welfare Rights Advisory Unit for the year ending 31 March 2018 and on key current issues about supporting people with benefits during a time of ongoing major changes to the benefits system. (Report attached to the official minutes as Appendix D.)

The report was introduced by the Cabinet member for Adult Wellbeing and Health, who welcomed the extra resources for the Attendance Allowance take up, which supported recipients and benefited the local area. The Rights Team Manager continued introducing the item with a presentation (copy attached to the official minutes of the meeting), of which the key details included:

- details of the staff team: three welfare rights officers and one administrative support officer
- the team's roles in delivering training, advice and support for professionals, direct casework for complex cases, and strategic role/policy support
- anonymised case studies about four welfare recipients
- key issues going forward: Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) assessments; Disability Living Allowance (DLA) / Personal Independence Plans (PIP) reassessment; Universal Credit - the service would be rolled out in Northumberland with new claims from November 2018 and managed migration from July 2019, with the Government aiming to complete this by 2023; and the Attendance Allowance, for which three additional Support Planners had been recruited to care management.

A member welcomed the report and the work of the team who had visited her area and assessed resident, resulting in a number of people being able to claim benefits; many people did not realise they were entitled to Attendance Allowance. Under proposed changes to local authority funding, the Council could receive £1,500 for each older person receiving Attendance Allowance.

Councillor Jones welcomed this feedback and referred to the underclaiming of available benefits in the North East, and the assistance that could be provided to help claimants complete application forms.

Members were reminded that a briefing about Universal Credit had taken place for all members earlier in the year, and a further update would be provided soon, given the changing situation. Close working continued to take place with the Citizens' Advice Bureau. Members also noted details of the previous types of benefits provided, the changes brought by Universal Credit and changes in assessments of people's ability for walking distances unaided.

Regarding the roll out of Universal Credit, Members were advised that the 2023 target could possibly be a challenging timescale, and there may remain a role for the Local Authority to continue administering housing benefit for longer than had been expected.

A member referred to paragraph 5.8 of the report and suggested that the terminology used should be amended, as the important issue was that young people leaving care received the maximum support, and that any cost saving was an additional benefit only.

A member referred to the impact of Universal Credit in Northumberland currently being on young single people and what any effect next on families, and queried if any information was available for figures on housing and homelessness? Members were advised that officers were undertaking work about this. Many young people affected might be jobseekers living at home so for that group this was not currently an issue but could be looked at as Universal Credit rolled out to families.

A member referred to the possibility of private landlords offering fewer tenancies to young people, as landlords no longer received the benefits directly. She welcomed the report, but requested that a further report be produced on the impacts of benefit changes on Northumberland residents. Members agreed that this proposal would be discussed with the Chair, and a follow up report could be organised if there were considered to be wider implications resulting from the changes.

Mr Thompson was thanked for his presentation and it was:

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) options for a follow up report be discussed with the Chair.

## **29. PRIMARY CARE APPLICATIONS WORKING PARTY**

Members received a verbal update from the Strategic Head of Corporate Affairs of the Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) about how he and other CCG officers had recently met with the Primary Care Applications Working Group twice in late June 2018 to discuss Collingwood Medical Group in Blyth.

This was following the difficult decision by Collingwood Medical Group to give six months notice to terminate their contract. The CCG's Primary Care Commissioning Committee, after exploring all the options, reached a decision to close the practice and to disperse the patient list at its meeting on 20 June. This decision was taken to ensure continuity of care for the patients and was supported by the Applications Working Party.

All staff and patients had subsequently been informed. Patients would have received their letters from Friday 29 June. The patient letters included a list of alternative GP practices and frequently asked questions. Key stakeholders including Healthwatch Northumberland and the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) had been informed. Three drop in sessions had been arranged and had been widely advertised. These would be attended by CCG staff, NHS England, Healthwatch, PALS and Collingwood Medical Group. Further information would be made available to patients who attended the drop in sessions and this information was also available to all via the CCG's website.

The CCG was now working very closely with NHS England to ensure that the dispersal was proactively managed to ensure that neighbouring practices did not experience undue pressure themselves and that all affected practices were fully supported throughout the process. Both the CCG and NHS England would also ensure that the needs of the more vulnerable patients were closely managed by the practice and that care for all patients was not compromised.

The Collingwood practice was currently open and operational; the notice period was until the end of November this year, which gave time for the safe transition of patients.

The Chair referred to how work had taken place with all local GP practices in Blyth throughout this period, and that all members of the Primary Care Applications Working Party present at the meetings had supported the dispersal option.

Members were advised that weekly progress meetings continued to take place about the situation; progress was being monitored very proactively.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the update be noted; and
- (2) an update be provided in due course.

### **30. REPORT OF THE SENIOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER**

#### **Health and Wellbeing OSC Work Programme**

Members considered the work programme for the Health and Wellbeing OSC and changes made since the last meeting. (Work programme enclosed with the official minutes as Appendix E.)

The Vice-chair referred to her attendance at the Regional Health Scrutiny Committee in Hartlepool on 21 June 2018 and concerns expressed there by Durham County Council about the proposals for the change in four to three regional specialised vascular service centres in the North East. Reassurance had been provided that this reorganisation would not have any impact on Northumberland, but NHS England had agreed to attend this committee's meeting on 4 September to provide an overview of the situation.

**RESOLVED** that the work programme and the addition to it be noted.

### **31. INFORMATION REPORTS**

#### **Policy Digest**

Members were advised of the availability of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which might be of interest to members, which was available on the Council's website.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**32. NEXT MEETING**

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting would place on Tuesday 4 September 2018. He added that all members of the committee had been consulted about the recent start time change from 2pm to 1pm, for which no objections had been received. Another member expressed concern about the previous decision to change the start time from mornings to afternoons without consulting committee members. The Chair confirmed that the 1pm start time would remain in the meantime.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_