

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Health & Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee** on Tuesday, 5 July 2022 at 1.00 p.m. at County Hall, Morpeth.

PRESENT

Councillor V. Jones
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

Bowman, L.	Hill, G.
Chicken, E.	Hunter, I.
Hardy, C.	Nisbet, K.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Angus, C.	Scrutiny Officer
Bradley, N.	Director of Adult Social Services
Curry, A.	Senior Manager - Commissioning
Liddle, J.	Senior Public Health Manager
Mitcheson, R.	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)
Morgan, L.	Interim Executive Director for Public Health and Community Services
Pattison, W.	Cabinet Member for Adults' Wellbeing
Phelps, P.	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)
Todd, A.	Democratic Services Officer

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Dodd, C. Humphrey and R. Wilczeck.

11. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Health & Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 3 May 2022 and 31 May 2022, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

12. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions (a copy of the Forward Plan has been filed with the signed minutes).

Ch.'s Initials.....

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

13. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Health & Wellbeing Board held on 12 May 2022 be noted.

REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY

14. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULT'S SOCIAL SERVICES

Delivering on the Extra Care and Supported Housing Strategy

A. Curry, Senior Manager – Commissioning presented an update on the strategy for the development of housing schemes designed to enable people to live independently. (A copy of the report has been filed with the signed minutes).

Members were informed that the Strategy was approved by Cabinet in 2018 which sought to oversee delivery of supported housing projects. Since 2018 work had been undertaken to build, purchase, remodel or commission 39 independent supported living projects, predominantly for adults with learning disabilities and/or mental health conditions. Additionally, one large project for older people had been completed which was positively received and was oversubscribed by prospective tenants. The schemes offered an additional 277 units of accommodation. There were now 750 units of independent supported accommodation in Northumberland, however, there was still an undersupply and the long-term impact of the pandemic on the care home sector could potentially increase demand.

Developments for older people had proved difficult to progress due to site availability and cost. It was anticipated demand for independent supported accommodation for older people would increase and this was an area of focus for Adults Social Care going forward. There remained a market of providers who were keen to progress this type of accommodation.

It was reported that no Council capital investment had been required in any of the schemes delivered to date, investment had been from Government, social or private sources and therefore the Council had capital available.

Discussion followed, of which the key points from members and responses were:

- Members discussed the new development in Cramlington, Rosebrough Court, which had been a great success. There had been an exceptional demand for the 60 units available. The site was a new build close to all local amenities including the shopping centre.

- Update about the possible development at the old Dove site in Spittal, Berwick upon Tweed was provided. It was reported that although the scheme had stalled officers were very keen to continue to pursue the site. It was a perfect location for a development of this kind. There was planning consent for the site and legal advice was being sought as to how to progress.
- It was confirmed that this Strategy was predominantly for adults with learning disabilities and/or mental health conditions, including depression.
- Members welcomed the Strategy which would support people to continue to live in community settings.

RESOLVED that the progress to date and future plans of the Strategy be noted.

15. IMPROVING ACCESS PROJECT FEEDBACK – GP ACCESS

P. Phelps, from North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) provided members with a powerpoint presentation on the feedback received from engagement work undertaken by the CCG regarding GP access in Northumberland. (A copy of the presentation has been filed with the signed minutes).

The presentation included:

- The background to why the Improving Access Project had been started.
- Overview of the research carried out by Explain Market Research, outreach surveys, focus groups and engagement work.
- The main results of the research survey, which were:
 - The wellbeing of professionals was being impacted by current working pressures with descriptions of burnout and exhaustion.
 - In general, Practice Managers had a positive outlook on how access to appointments were currently working in their respective practices, in terms of ensuring patients were able to get an appointment when needed.
 - The introduction of digital tools was thought of as a positive in terms of improving access.
 - Overall, patients felt that access to GPs had declined post COVID with both satisfaction score for online and on-street respondents showing significant room for improvement.
 - Details of the 8am rush caused by the morning booking system.
 - The availability of pre-bookable appointments was a key area of improvement from the survey.
 - People were willing to wait a few days for an appointment if it was not for an acute issue.
 - Awareness raising required around booking online.
 - The large majority of respondents stated that they preferred to book appointments over the telephone.
 - Younger people showed greater support for booking via an app or online form.

- Telephone appointments were wanted by respondents in older age groups, lower social economic groups, and other protected characteristics.
- The need for a segmented approach as many respondents described positive experiences with telephone consultations.
- Issues with awareness and confidence in the wider healthcare system.
- There was a strong support for out of hours however there was also a lack of awareness of what was currently being provided.
- People were not aware of Hubs although many were willing to travel to be seen quicker.
- Next steps to improve access following the data gathered, including:
 - Consolidating all information from the survey.
 - Understanding the variation of access models currently in place and reflections from the survey.
 - Tackling the perception of general practice.
 - Informing communities and continue to keep them updated.
 - Identifying improvements and alternatives.
 - Defining the language to be used.
 - Improve the wellbeing of staff and recruitment.
 - Develop a working group to oversee the work to take place to help achieve the next steps identified.

Healthwatch Northumberland were not present at the meeting but asked for the following comments to be noted:

- Healthwatch Northumberland commended the work and report about GP access and were pleased to help extend the reach of the survey.
- Much of the findings on patient satisfaction mirrored what Healthwatch had heard (and continued to hear) such as the morning rush to get an appointment, being unable to get through, no availability remaining and the inability to book routine appointments.
- There needed to be better promotion of different roles within surgeries, people were much more likely to get on board with seeing alternative healthcare professionals if reassured that they were skilled or experienced enough to deal with their medical complaints.
- There needed to be more awareness raised about booking online and one of the barriers to this was the lack of patient knowledge. GP websites did not always make the process clear.
- The Healthwatch Click and Connect report highlighted many issues with GP access and had made recommendations. The report could be found on the Healthwatch website.
- Healthwatch was currently in the process of reviewing GP websites. Awareness about eConsult was one area being highlighted within the review. It was questioned what could be done to ensure patients were aware of eConsult. In response it was advised that eConsult was one of many tools available which had been developed to help improve access. However, it was accepted that there was currently a lack of knowledge as to how to access online systems.

- Clarification on what would be a 'segmented approach' to GP access. In response it was confirmed that this would be developed as part of the role for the working group which would include Healthwatch.

Members comments and responses included:

- The concern that patients were now resigned to the fact GP access was not up to standard and no longer felt there was any point in challenging this to improve it.
- Many patients expected to still be able to access face to face appointments but an acknowledgment that there needed to be a variation of access models.
- The national problem of GP retention and staffing which was affecting Northumberland.
- Reports of patients still not being called for their regular health reviews since pre COVID and a concern that some practices seemed not to be back to offering a full service.
- There needed to be fairer and equitable services for patients.
- Confirmation that there were still sickness and welfare issues within the workforce.
- The need to raise awareness so patients understood the different roles within general practice services.
- It was felt that sometimes merging practices created too large a practice which made GP access more difficult. The advantages and disadvantages of combining services were discussed.
- It was confirmed that the ICB would continue to work with any practice wanting additional information, support or guidance to help improve patient experiences.
- The evolving role of Patient Participation Groups (PPG's) and the need for these to have a more substantial role in helping to improve GP access.
- One system does not fit all but patient experience needed to be improved.
- Today, the NHS celebrated 74 years of service. It was a wonderful service which was innovate and had learn to adapt over the years to meet the changing needs of each successive generation.
- The need to work together to improve the entire system to benefit the Northumberland community.

RESOLVED that the:

- (a) presentation and comments made be noted.
- (b) the Scrutiny Officer contact Members of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to seek nominations to sit on the GP Access Working Group.

16. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

Health and Wellbeing OSC Work Programme

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2022/23 council year. (A copy of the work programme has been filed with the signed minutes).

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, 6 September 2022 at 1:00 p.m.

18. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

- (a) That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items on the Agenda as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act, and
- (b) That the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

Agenda Item	Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A
12	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
AND	The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure because disclosure could adversely affect the business reputation or confidence in the person /organisation and could adversely affect commercial revenue.

19. REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Integrated Sexual Health Service for Northumberland – Permission to Tender

The report provided the background to the need to provide a comprehensive open-access sexual health service as part of the council’s statutory public health functions; and to seek permission to proceed with a formal tender exercise. (A copy of the report, coloured pink and marked ‘not for publication’ has been filed with the signed minutes).

L. Morgan, Interim Executive Director of Public Health and Community Services, and J. Liddle, Senior Public Health Manager detailed the main points of the report for members.

Members recognised the importance of preventing poor sexual health, addressing inequality and improving outcomes for the community in Northumberland.

RESOLVED to recommend that Cabinet:

- Consider the contents of this report, the key issues and background.
- Note that the total value of the 4-year contract is approximately £9,522,000.
- Comment on the proposals.
- Authorise the Interim Executive Director of Public Health and Community Services to proceed with the commissioning exercise.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____