

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Health & Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee** on
Thursday, 4 January 2022 at 1:00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor V Jones
(Chair, in the Chair)

MEMBERS

L Bowman
C Hardy
G Hill

I Hunter
R Wilczek

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

C Angus
N Bradley

Scrutiny Officer
Service Director for Adult Social
Care.

K Wright

Senior Manager for Safeguarding
Adults

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

P Mead

Chair of Safeguarding Adults Board

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dodd, Ferguson, Humphrey, and Nisbet.

43. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Health & Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny, held on 9 December 2021, as circulated be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

44. FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET DECISIONS

Ch.'s Initials.....

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of key decisions.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

45. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Health & Wellbeing Board be agreed.

REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY

46. WORKFORCE ISSUES IN COMMISSIONED CARE SERVICES

The report was presented to the Committee by Neil Bradley, Service Director for Adult Social Care.

The report asked cabinet to contractually obligate providers to raise the minimum wage of career workers in Northumberland to meet the level of the real living wage.

Neil Bradley outlined that recruitment and retention of care workers was a national, regional, and local problem. In Northumberland the issue became acute in the summer of 2021, shortly after COVID restrictions were relaxed and the entertainment sector was able to reopen. It had quickly become apparent staff were leaving to work in the entertainment sector and this had manifested itself as pressure on service delivery in adult social care.

The pressure first became apparent in domiciliary care resulting in 160-200 packages of care that are undeliverable due to staffing levels. This had stabilised at around 200 packages, with 192 being outstanding just before the Christmas period.

The pressure had started to spread into the care home sector. This had been delayed during COVID due to the increased death rates in the care home sector and reluctance to place people into care homes. This meant there was an increase in vacancies and the homes were able to be sustained with fewer staff. As care homes started to fill up again staffing had resurfaced as an issue with a couple of providers being unable to accept new residents as a result.

The Council have been working closely with providers to advertise roles through the Council's social media channels. It was anticipated a national recruitment campaign headed by the Government would start shortly. The Government had also allocated some conditional funding to local authorities which the Council had used to launch a retention scheme for domiciliary staff who stay in post between December and March. The Government had announced further funding with options for usage currently being reviewed.

Neil Bradley highlighted to the Committee that a petition had been submitted by the Hexham Living Wage Group asking for an increase to the national living wage by providers. This petition was due to be heard at the petitions committee later in the month.

The Committee were informed of the difference between the National Living Wage and the Real Living Wage. Members were told that difference between the two wages had been reducing over recent years. The gap in 2014 was around 20% but was around 4% today which makes the proposal much more achievable today than it was a few years ago. It was expected that the two wages be converge by 2024.

The Committee were pleased to see this report and its recommendations. Members heard from Healthwatch Northumberland on how consistency of care had been a key theme in the work they had undertaken to understand the needs and experiences of those using domiciliary care. Members discussed the impacts of these proposed changes on full fee-paying residents. Members felt it was important to be transparent when outlining the cost of care to residents.

Members sought assurance on consistency across providers in the region and were informed that providers could not be obligated to accept these terms and they may choose not to and refuse the additional payment. It was not clear how many would or wouldn't accept these terms. It was noted that Durham had already increased wages beyond the living wage to £10.15 an hour for domiciliary staff only from 1 December.

The Committee felt it was important this proposal was reviewed in the future to examine whether it had on its own, helped with recruitment and retention and whether other methods should be considered.

The Committee fully supported the paper but felt strongly, that Option A did not go far enough, and Option B was the least desirable of the three.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.

47. NORTH TYNESIDE AND NORTHUMBERLAND SAFEGUARDING ADULTS ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

The report was presented to the Committee by Paula Mead, Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board and Children's Safeguarding Partnership and Karen Wright, Senior Manager in Safeguarding Adults.

Members were reminded the Adult Safeguarding Board was a strategic multi-agency arrangement that provided strategic oversight of all the organisations that have responsibility under the Care Act 2014. The Board was a joint safeguarding board with North Tyneside and therefore some of the report was relevant to North Tyneside.

The Board had recently undertaken an external peer review and one of the recommendations was to separate the Board into two separate authorities in order to develop a greater focus on Place based care. The Board was also investigating how it could work more closely with the Children's Safeguarding Partnership. These changes would take effect from April 2022.

The Committee received an update on the highlights from the report. It was highlighted that the priorities and work of the Board had been heavily influenced by COVID-19 and lockdown such as COVID recovery and the impacts on safeguarding.

There had been a 40% increase in reported safeguarding concerns and a 14% increase in safeguarding enquires. There had been a shift in the location of these concerns from previous years; the home was now the primary location of many incidents. There had also been a change in referrers from the social care workforce to the police. The police had strengthened their approach to vulnerability and welfare which allowed closer working together to identify those vulnerable people in the community.

Locally, there had been an increase in physical abuse, domestic abuse, and self-neglect. The possibility of these increases had been identified early by the Board's COVID-19 risk register. On a more general note, the impact of COVID resulted in an increase of lower-level welfare concerns such as isolation and mental health as people have struggled with COVID and lockdown.

There had been no Safeguarding Adults Reviews for Northumberland this year. Safeguarding Adults Reviews are serious reviews undertaken when an adult identified at risk dies as a result of abuse or a failing on behalf of partners. A joint review with Children's Board had been undertaken in Northumberland and the report highlighted the learning from this review.

Members were informed of some of the feedback following the peer review, specifically that the board was valued and well regarded as a forum for bringing partners together, and that relationships between partner agencies were strong. The Board planned to build on this as the changes to the Board progress.

The Committee had an in-depth discussion about safeguarding vulnerable people from fraud and sought assurance that the Board did challenge partners to ensure partners were doing taking effective measures to safeguard adults. Questions were asked about the work Northumbria Police were doing. It was acknowledged that more could be done in relation to fraud and financial abuse, but reassurance was given on the progress made in criminal exploitation and a move to a victim approach.

The Committee also sought assurance that the Board was confident of early intervention and the link between children and adults safeguarding. Members were informed of the range of training and supervision in place to ensure people are kept safe.

Members raised concerns about the visibility of the Just Say app. The Board agreed to revisit the comms campaign for this app and address the concerns of the Committee.

The Board was thanked for its work and the work of its partners. The Committee stressed the importance of all of the partners working together effectively.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

48. Health and Wellbeing OSC Work Programme

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2021/22 council year.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

49. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, 1 February at 1:00 pm.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____