

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board

Monday 14th September 2020 at 5.00 pm

Present: Councillor E M Giles (Chair)
Councillors Piper (Vice-Chair), Costigan, Hackett, Hartwell,
Jarvis, R Jones, Kausar and Tranter.

Officers: Lisa McNally (Director of Public Health), Chris Masikane, Executive Director of Operations, Black Country Healthcare NHS FT Trust (BCH NHS FT), Yassar Mohammed, Equality and Diversity Lead for BCH NHS FT, Melvena Anderson, Deputy Director of Mental Health for BCH NHS FT, Colin Marsh, Service Manager: Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, Sandwell Council.
Karmah Boothe, Head of Strategic Partnership & Commissioning, Children's Services, Sandwell Council, Diane Millichamp, Vulnerable Adults Project Manager, Public Health, Sandwell Council, James Cole Adults Mental Health Commissioning Manager (Sandwell & West Birmingham CCG) and James Sandy (Democratic Services), John Taylor and David Bradshaw (Healthwatch).

16/20 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Phillips.

17/20 **Chairs announcements**

Members had received a copy of the letter of 16th July 2020 from NHS England and NHS Improvement/ Midlands Regional Renal Network outlining how initial service review plans had been



affected by the COVID 19 pandemic. The Chair suggested that the panel monitor this and bring further updates to the committee as appropriate.

The panel had received an invitation to complete a short stakeholder survey regarding the West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) Five Year Strategy from the Director of Nursing, Quality and Clinical Commissioning. The questions were designed to seek organisational views rather than personal opinions. All feedback would not be attributed to individual responses. The Chair suggested that she respond on behalf of this panel and relate this to the panels' previous written response to the trust.

Resolved: That the chair respond to the survey and monitor for further updates regarding these issues as outlined.

18/20 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr R Jones declared an interest prior to the previous item as an employee of the West Midlands Ambulance Service.

Cllr Giles, Hartwell and Tranter each declared an interest in having family members who were employees of the Council.

Cllr Piper declared an interest as a Governor of Black Country Healthcare NHS FT Trust.

19/20 **Minutes**

It was noted that due to a connectivity issue at the start of the last meeting Dave Bradshaw from Healthwatch Sandwell was not recorded as being in attendance and that the minutes should be updated to reflect that he was present.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2020 be approved as a correct record subject to David Bradshaw being included on the attendance record. .

20/20 **Focused Session on Mental Health Support in Sandwell**

At its meeting on 6th July 2020 the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board agreed to hold a focused meeting on mental health support to consider the issues in more depth. This meeting would

consider the different tiers of services available at present in relation to: Prevention in the community, supporting vulnerable adults, carers and dementia and NHS capacity in local primary and secondary care.

The Chair outlined that this meeting would be conducted in a workshop style to allow for a fuller discussion and presentations across the range of issues.

The Director of Public Health introduced this session and the speakers from partner agencies who had been invited to provide further detail and context for the discussion. Each speaker then presented in turn, allowing for specific questions after each presentation.

Presentation (1): 'Our Journey'

Chris Masikane, Executive Director of Operations, Black Country Healthcare NHS FT Trust (BCH NHS FT).

Cllr Piper stated that it would have been helpful to have had sight of the presentation prior to the meeting to enable proper scrutiny. He thanked the trust for a very comprehensive overview of the trust's work in the current Covid-19 situation. He stressed that his interest was on what the community impact of social isolation had been and how people had been trying to cope with it.

The Executive Director of Operations responded that the trust had noticed an increased number of referrals from people who had not previously been known to services and that more people were accessing services since the outbreak.

The Equality and Diversity Lead for BCH NHS FT added that there had been a lot of community work undertaken and that on the 28th September 2020 at 11.00 am an event would be held for the community, voluntary sector and people with Covid experience to consider the wider impact of the virus. He stated that he would be happy to return to this panel to feedback from that session and share the learning that emerged.

The Deputy Director of Mental Health for BCH NHS FT added that a number of people who were previously not known to the trust had come forward with a range of complex mental health issues since the virus pandemic. She stated that the trust was working to

understand this and what the pathways for those individuals looked like.

Cllr Costigan thanked staff from the trust for a very comprehensive presentation. She commented that the crisis had been affecting the mental health of people she had not expected it to.

The Executive Director of Operations commented that the Trust was still working hard to understand a number of behavioural impacts on personal and family circumstances. The Chair commented that people now had a greater awareness of mental health issues and anxiety.

Presentation (2): 'Mental Wellbeing in care homes during Covid-19'

Colin Marsh, Service Manager: Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, Sandwell Council.

The service manager advised that the council was still learning from a care home perspective. It was suggested that whilst the national focus had always been on the numbers of cases and fatalities from Covid it was not always considerate of the mental health impact or the need for support. He provided an overview of care homes provision in the borough and the in-house services offered. His view was that most homes within Sandwell did not expect the length or duration of pandemic that we were now witnessing, initially many considered it might be a lockdown of two to three weeks. As a consequence, it was suggested that this has had a major impact on both residents and staff in care homes. Care homes were not able to operate on a 'work from home' model as they constitute a twenty-four-hour service which had to be maintained throughout.

The service manager commented that a national concern had initially arisen regarding the Sandwell picture, but the reality was that thirty five of eighty homes had had some experience of Covid-19 and that two hundred and twenty-three people had been tested. Sandwell has had no reported deaths within care homes in the last six weeks. The service continued to be vigilant and to be mindful of the effect on people's mental wellbeing.

He stated that staff had not expected the outbreak to last so long, but that the majority of them had put their own lives on hold to deal with the crisis, sacrificing both time with families and personal time.

Cllr Elaine Giles asked what support had been given to those staff experiencing mental health issues themselves?

The service manager responded that this had been a case of increased encouragement and support, stressing the need to take proper breaks, deterring people from working flat out. This had been particularly hard considering the dedication exhibited by staff. Staff teams had also demonstrated a willingness to be mutually supportive and to share their experiences. Some very tired staff had required additional support from occupational health.

Cllr Piper noted that it had been stressful for staff who had had close contact with elderly residents and that such contact created additional pressure on themselves. Did they not require additional support?

The service manager stated that a small number of staff had taken up the offer of extra counselling and targeted mental health services, but the majority had coped well with the situation.

The Vulnerable Adults Project Manager supported this assessment and stated that a number of webinars regarding PPE and mental health issues had been provided via a toolkit which had also addressed dealing with bereavement and highlighted available counselling.

The Adults Mental Health Commissioning Manager from Sandwell & West Birmingham CCG added that his organisation had opened up access to emotional and therapeutic support services and commissioning Silver Cloud services to provide help remotely to staff within the social care and voluntary & community sectors. There had been limited take up, but informal support through trusted networks had been impacted and it was equally as important. The CCG had decided to ensure that these extra packages remain in place as an option throughout the pandemic. Health and social care frontline staff were being prioritised for fast access in relation to their support needs.

Presentation (3): 'Children's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health- Supporting Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health, COVID 19 Response'.

Karmah Boothe, Head of Strategic Partnership & Commissioning, Children's Services, Sandwell Council.

The Head of Strategic Partnership & Commissioning outlined the work of a recently formed working group designed to react to issues around emotional wellbeing and mental health and to address emerging needs. Much of the planning focused on managing the many offers presented to local schools and in trying to avoid them becoming saturated.

The presentation outlined key areas and included surge planning and the response principles that had been adopted. The aim was to address school support from a multi-agency perspective and to ensure a system wide response. The work focused on assessing trigger points, gaining a better understanding of provision and looking at the outcomes achieved to date. Children needed to be supported through transition points and provided with a degree of emotional readiness.

Cllr Giles asked if young children going back to school would be given opportunities to connect?

The Head of Strategic Partnership & Commissioning stated it was really difficult due to how bubbles had been structured within school settings, there was also a need to address the longer-term impact. Services still needed to get a better understanding of how some of these changes would be normalised and how children could interact.

Cllr Hackett asked if CAMHS referrals were really down by fifty percent as stated in the presentation?

The Head of Strategic Partnership & Commissioning confirmed this figure citing the fact schools had not been open to support referrals at the same rate. Online resources and platforms had been used to push the offer and the types of support and it was noted that sometimes the CAMHS pathways were not always the most appropriate or relevant. It was suggested that there remained a real need to get the message out to a wider cohort and to ensure

the offer was relevant and that joint working remained in place. She reported that referrals had started to return to pre-lockdown rates and that in some specific areas there had been an increase in demand by around thirty percent. More data analysis was needed to complete this picture.

Cllr Costigan asked how instances of domestic abuse and isolation affected this area and how we could work to tackle this as a priority?

The Head of Strategic Partnership & Commissioning highlighted that all schools have a charter mark in place regarding mental health support and this has been revised to reflect the need for a changed response in the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to loneliness and isolation. Curriculum friendly support would be central to addressing these issues and schools were being canvassed to ensure that their concerns were being taken on board. Work was underway to establish a skills collective rather than saturate one area.

Cllr Hartwell commended the presentation slides and asked if there was any data that existed on the uptake of parents returning kids to school and schools that have been affected by Covid- 19 during reopening?

The Director of Public Health confirmed that the council had received a high number of enquires relating to the new government restrictions which applied to Sandwell, Solihull and Birmingham. A number of clarifications had also been sent from central government regarding the restrictions and the council had begun to update the FAQs section of its website to account for these issues.

The Director of Public Health stated that the guidance was often a matter of interpretation and a number of activities were not covered by the national guidance specifically. This was then a matter of local judgement. It was stated that the guidance had caused a lot of confusion and anger with regards to child care where working parents relied upon close family (such as grandparents). This was because the new guidance stopped the mixing of separate households. Sandwell and Solihull Councils had written to the Government to highlight that this is preventing

many from returning to work and that the public health view was that this area was not a driver for transmission. It was, however, currently legal for grandparents to provide childcare in a private house.

Cllr Piper reiterated his request to have future presentations and material prior to the meeting.

Cllr Costigan asked how many people adult social care had contacted in relation to mental health needs since March 2020?

The service manager (adult social care) committed to following this up and in bringing a summary to the next meeting.

In response to a query from Cllr Hartwell the Director of Public Health clarified that voluntary sector workers in Sandwell had been given the same status as those working for paid services.

The Board supported a recommendation from the Chair to hold a further session based on the updated data cited in this session (as available).

Resolved: That a follow up session be convened to address the data requested in this meeting and to link to the issues identified relating to CAMHS, young people and the impact of Covid-19 on mental health in the borough as a whole.

Due to connectivity issues Cllr Piper (Vice Chair) took the Chair for the next item on the agenda for the meeting (at 6.44pm).

The Vulnerable Adults Project Manager, Public Health gave a brief overview of the staff surveys and support that had taken place since March 2020 in Sandwell. Work was still underway to consider this reset and recovery data. Further analysis would be provided at the follow up session to this meeting. It was reported that the council has experienced a reduction in short term sickness absence, but issues of stress, mental health support and depression had become more prevalent (around a twenty-five percent increase). Support for more digital and remote working was now more pressing, as well as a need to tailor to individual circumstance through managers. A commitment was made to

illustrate the data for engagement in a presentation to the next session.

The Adults Mental Health Commissioning Manager from Sandwell And West Birmingham CCG gave apologies on behalf of the Children's and Young Persons Mental Health Commissioning Manager who had been unable to attend this meeting due to personal circumstance. Supporting the previous presentations, he stressed a commitment to bring more information to the follow up session. The CCG had done much initially to demobilise services and the challenge presented was working out how a population reliant on conventional routes could access services effectively. A telephone first culture persisted and 'fear of access' issues remained.

Informal and emotional support had been reduced and this had affected people's sense of security (e.g. going to the shops, the pub, social clubs).

The CCG was currently trying to identify stories and create an understanding of a wider narrative which would be important as Sandwell entered into the second phase of the pandemic. It was suggested that waiting times had reduced and that this had allowed for some of the previous backlog to be addressed. The Black Country had always seen closer integration in services, but longer term there were some big consultation exercises required to enable formal institutional change. The NHS Long Term Plan needed to ensure investment in mental health and looking at a broader basis of funding to ensure third sector support.

It was stated that virtual platforms had been really helpful during this time and that they would be retained around renewed terms of reference. The Covid situation had a restoration focus but the Council needed to make sure that we preserved the good practice that had emerged as a result.

Cllr Giles returned to chairing the meeting (6.50 pm).

Cllr Hartwell asked what the levels of suicide had been in the borough and if they had markedly changed?

The Vulnerable Adults Project Manager stated that Sandwell had been leading the way in collecting and applying local data, but this

had currently been hampered by issues relating access to Coroners data.

The Director of Public Health voiced concern that there may be an increase in suicide levels given increased isolation and anxiety factors and that while the Covid 19 situation still persisted people's mental health would continue to suffer. The Board noted the need to think very hard about the resources required in tackling its psychosocial effects.

Cllr Giles gave her thanks and best wishes to James Sandy who would be shortly leaving Democratic Services. Cllr Piper seconded these remarks.

21/20

Any other business

None.

Meeting ended at 7.00 pm

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