

Monday, 15 July 2024

ADULTS, WELLBEING & HEALTH SCRUTINY & IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Adults, Wellbeing & Health Scrutiny & Improvement Committee was held on Monday, 15 July 2024 at the Redcar and Cleveland Civic Centre.

PRESENT Councillor M Ovens (Chair)
Councillors C Cawley, C Curr, C Hannaway,
G Jeffery, L White, J Hart, P Salvin and M Head.

OFFICIALS M Adams, P Rice, V Wilson and S Connolly and
C Leng.

IN ATTENDANCE Councillor U Earl and L Robson.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Kay (Vice-Chair), M Fairley, J Lavan and L Rynn.

34 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 JUNE 2024 AND TO CONFIRM THE ATTENDANCE MATRIX**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Adults, Wellbeing & Health Scrutiny & improvement Committee held of the 03 June 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record, and the attendance matrix be noted.

35 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest; **NOTED**.

36 **RELEVANT CABINET REPORTS**

Financial Outturn Position 2023/2024

With the agreement of the Chair, a Member asked a question relating to the impact of backlogs on the budget position. Members were advised that there was an impact but that it was relatively small in the context of the wider financial position.

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37 **SCRUTINY REVIEW OF UNPAID CARERS - TO FOLLOW**

The Executive Director for Adults & Communities advised Members that, following a topic prioritisation meeting, that carers (both paid and unpaid) had been identified for in-depth review. Services provided for unpaid carers would be considered initially.

A presentation was delivered, which covered the following key points:

- The definition of unpaid carer, as a person providing care who is not part of the commissioned workforce.
- The local population profile, pointing to the acute challenges posed by an ageing population in Redcar & Cleveland Borough, resulting in a greater burden of caring on fewer people. Members noted that there is a higher burden of unpaid care in Redcar & Cleveland than in much of the rest of the country.
- The types of care provided, the impact of caring on carers and the growing burden on unpaid carers.
- The national context, with statistics estimating the number of unpaid carers in England and Wales at 5 million and showing that around 4.7% of the population provide 20 hours or more per week of care.
- Changes to the Care Act introduced in 2014 which put in place significant new rights for carers in England.
- Redcar and Cleveland statistics relating to the number of known carers and the estimated hours of care they provided, and consultation responses regarding quality-of-life metrics and access to support and services.
- Partnership working leading to the development of important services. Members were referred to the South Tees Carers Forum, South Tees Carers Strategy and the South Tees All Age Carer Support Services. Further to this, the South Tees We Care, You Care platform provided an essential signposting service.
- Members were asked to note that improvement work relating to carers assessments had been identified and might be a focus for the review.
- An internal Carers Working Group was working with Healthwatch to improve services.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the following comments and questions were noted:

- Further to a question relating to Carers Allowance, Members were advised that carer benefits did not have any impact on whether a carer could access local authority carer services, although may impact on carers views and the services they wished to access.
- A Member noted some of the difficulties faced by residents when

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accessing services at the transition from Children's to Adults Services, particularly in relation to unpaid caring. Members were advised that transitional social work was a priority, with, amongst other initiatives, the introduction of a preparatory 14+ review stage. Further to discussion, it was AGREED a scrutiny review of support for carers and guardians of families going through transitions, be prioritised as part of the work programme. This should involve the formation of a joint task and finish panel, between Adults, Wellbeing & Health and Children & Families Scrutiny & Improvement Committees. The Chair of Children & Families Scrutiny Committee to be contacted with a request to raise the issue at the next meeting.

- A member noted that across North Yorkshire Social Care Teams, there had been a semantic shift, with the word 'assessment' being replaced by 'conversation', to alter the perception of the process. There was also greater focus on carers' needs and the importance of accessibility and locality.
- Members were advised that a conversation was ongoing with RCBC staff to identify and support carers. A flexible working policy had been adopted, and a forum for staff carers implemented.
- A Member asked for consideration to be given to utilising community groups to better identify and engage with unpaid carers.
- A Member asked the extent to which those identified as 'economically inactive' were also part of the population of unpaid carers. Members were advised that there was potentially a small cross-over, although the term 'economically inactive' referred primarily to people suffering from long and short-term sickness, those studying or retired and people looking after family/home. Members to be provided with more granular detail if available, relating to the term 'economically inactive' and the extent to which this is impacted by people with unpaid caring duties.
- Members asked how we reach the many unpaid carers that we are not aware of, particularly in view of the significant economic impact where there is little support provided.
- Members noted that assessments are daunting for some people and feel impersonal, which may be a barrier to support. Members were advised that the service area is aware of this and is transitioning towards 'conversation records' rather than formal assessments.
- A Member asked how Health and Community Co-ordinators might be utilised to support the service.
- The Scrutiny Officer to liaise with the Chair and Executive Director to identify external service providers for attendance at the next Committee meeting; **NOTED.**

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38 **ANNUAL COMPLAINTS, SERVICE REQUESTS AND COMPLIMENTS**

The Executive Director for Adults and Communities referred Members to the Complaints, Service Requests & Compliments Annual Report which provided an overview and analysis of all complaints received and handled through the Council's statutory complaints procedure, in addition to the handling of feedback received in the form of service requests and compliments about Adult Social Care services. The report formed part of the vital user engagement activity for the services.

Further to discussion, the following comments and questions were noted:

- A Member asked for further information relating to the term 'poor service delivery', and whether complaints related to Council or third-party providers. Members were advised that due to the complexity of some of the complaints, it could be both.
- A discussion took place relating to support for users and carers for whom English is not a first language.
- A Member asked for staff to be congratulated in recognition of the small number of complaints received.
- A Member requested additional information to better understand the extent of 'staff conduct' complaints and Members were advised that perceived attitude and communication had been the most common incidents inciting complaint. Members were further advised that changes to care packages could contribute to distress if not communicated properly; **NOTED**.

39 **PUBLIC HEALTH VERBAL UPDATE**

The Director of Public Health, Public Health South Tees, provided a verbal update covering the following key points:

- The Free School Meals (FSM) auto enrolment programme would commence in September 2024 and will replace the current 'opt in' model, which results in around 10 - 15% of pupils entitled to FSM not receiving them. Councils would use existing data to calculate eligibility, and it is estimated that around £411,000 of cash would be made available to schools via Pupil Premium Funding. Savings to families was estimated at £400 annually. A Press release was expected later in the week.
- The School Holiday, Activities and Food summer programme was about to begin, and had been nationally recognised for its community work. 40% of eligible families had accessed the programme across Redcar & Cleveland and Middlesbrough, which was double the average for the country. An offer to visit the programme was extended to Members, with the programme circulated to members in due course.

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As part of the ensuing discussion, the following comments and questions were noted:

- A Member asked if the programme was eligible only for families entitled to FSM and Members were advised that specifics would be circulated to the Committee in due course.
- Members requested further information relating to the figures upon which auto-enrolment numbers are based and Members were advised that Department for Work & Pensions figures were utilised, and that pupils who didn't enrol would be targeted.
- A Member queried the reasons why families might choose to not access FSM, and how the gap might be bridged. Members were advised that deterrents include literacy and language barriers, trust issues and stigma. It was hoped that the auto enrol system would address some of these concerns.
- A Member requested an update regarding the recent measles outbreak. Members were informed that the situation was improved and that the Infection Control Team had been stood down in Redcar and Cleveland.
- Members raised concerns regarding an increase in the number of young people vaping and receiving medical intervention as a result, with young people allegedly accessing vapes unknowingly containing 'spice' and schools seemingly unwilling to engage. The Director of Public Health advised that he would attempt to retrieve data from A&E.
- A Member requested an update on the national Whooping Cough outbreak and Members were informed that a national vaccination programme for pregnant women was ongoing. Local figures were rising but not higher than those reported nationally. A briefing note would be shared with Members of the Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Welfare advised that the Household Support Fund would cease in October and requested support for a Council motion asking government to continue provision of the fund;
NOTED.

40 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 24/25**

The Scrutiny Officer to contact the Chair of Children & Families Scrutiny & Improvement Committee to request agreement for commencement of a joint task & finish panel to review support to carers where young people are involved in transitional services; **NOTED.**

41 **OUTSIDE BODIES UPDATE**

There were no updates for discussion; **NOTED.**

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42 **ACTION UPDATE**

The Action Update was **NOTED**.

43 **ANY ITEMS THE CHAIR CERTIFIES AS URGENT**

There were no items certified as urgent.