

ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 2 March 2021

PRESENT – Councillors Curry (Chair), Crumbie, Mrs Culley, Holroyd, Laing, Layton, M Nicholson, Renton and A J Scott.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Bell and Preston.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Mills and Hayley Robertshaw, Director of Care and Development, St. Martin's Care.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Christine Shields (Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation), Kevin Kelly (Head of Learning Disability and Mental Health) and Paul Dalton (Elections Officer).

AD27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

AD28 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 5 JANUARY 2021

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 5 January 2021.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 5 January 2021, be approved as a correct record.

AD29 COVID RESPONSE - VERBAL UPDATE

The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Transformation provided a verbal update on the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically in relation to care providers.

It was reported that the number of positive cases across Darlington was dropping, from 61.8 per 100,000 on 25 January 2021, to 6.6 per 100,000 on 27 February 2021, and that this was reflected in care settings. Recent contact with care providers revealed that there had been no deaths attributable to Covid-19 within a care setting within the previous two weeks.

Members were informed that since 28 September 2020, 271 care home staff had been diagnosed with Covid-19, with 284 care home residents receiving a positive diagnosis. During the same period, it was reported that 73 staff in domiciliary care had been positively diagnosed with Covid-19, and that 33 service users had contracted the virus.

The Committee were informed that there were six ongoing outbreaks within care home settings, and that these were being carefully managed with support from the Public Health Team and the Outbreak Control Team.

In relation to vaccinations, it was reported that 95% of staff across the provider sector

had received their initial Covid vaccination, and that this figure rose to 99% when considering staff solely in care and domiciliary settings. It was noted that these figures did not include those staff who had not engaged with the vaccination programme, or those who were currently ill with Covid-19. Members were informed that 94% of care home residents in Darlington had also received their initial Covid-19 vaccination.

Members were informed that visits had been possible in some care homes where Covid-secure measures had been implemented, and the Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Transformation informed Members of a forthcoming change to legislation that would permit one nominated visitor.

It was reported that staffing levels remained high, with just a 4% absence rate across the care and domiciliary sector, however concerns were expressed in relation to occupancy and void levels, introducing a threat of unsustainability. Members were advised about the distribution of the Workforce Capacity Fund.

Members expressed concern at the level of risk to the sustainability and stability within the sector. Members were also keen to hear whether the situation in Darlington reflected the national picture, and wanted to know whether arrangements were in place to deliver on the recent changes to the vaccination programme as regard those with learning disabilities. The Chair enquired about the psychological support available to staff who were employed in care home and domiciliary settings throughout the duration of the pandemic.

Members also heard from Hayley Robertshaw, Director of Care and Development at St. Martin's Care, who had six care homes across the North East. Ms. Robertshaw provided an overview of the support received from Darlington Borough Council and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust, and gave testimony on working in a local care home during the pandemic.

Members were keen to know more about the current Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) situation in care homes, the visiting situation with care settings and the enhanced visitors strategy, and the hospital transition arrangements. Discussion ensued on the approach being adopted by providers whose staff refused the Covid-19 vaccine.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the update be noted.

AD30 WORK PROGRAMME

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during 2020/21, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Members received an update on the work of the Autism Review Group, and were informed of the recommendations arising from the Group's meeting on 24 February 2021.

RESOLVED – (a) That the current status of the Work Programme be noted.

(b) That the recommendations of the Autism Review Group be noted.