

Council – 18th November 2013

Portfolio Brief – Social Care

In the early part of the year there was a strong focus on getting the model right for personal budgets and Cabinet approved in March a policy that kept personal budgets at the heart of the work we are doing with customers who need long term services. The numbers of people receiving personal budgets now is over half of the customers who receive longer term care and support and this includes all new services users. By next year we expect that all customers will have a personal budget to meet their longer term needs. About one third of those who have a personal budget choose to take this in the form of a Direct Payment.

In June the Cabinet approved a clear policy which focused the work of adult social care clearly on developing our preventive input for all our customers. We both looked to improve the offer we gave to people when they first approach the Council in crisis. We continue to build an effective service based on Streets Corner where the call navigators supported by a range of people who can offer preventive interventions are looking to help people quickly and efficiently.

Managing demand from the Acute Hospital continues to place a challenge to the Department. The improvements and investments we have made to the reablement service and to our in-house residential care intermediate service is paying dividends and enabling more older people to be discharged safely and quickly. However, the 9% increase in admissions to the hospital has led to more demands on the services – particularly for frail elderly people and we are still working with the hospital to get the best response for people with dementia and more complex care needs when they are ready for discharge. Relationships with health continue to be very positive – and our partnership working with all colleagues in the NHS does allow us to look at how together we resolve the more difficult issues. During the summer a Partnership Board has been established, where Public Health and Adult Social Care from the Local Authority sit down with the Leaders of the Health Services – from the Manor Hospital Trust; the Mental Health Trust and the Clinical Commissioning Group to develop more integrated services in Walsall. Their progress is reported to the Health and Well-Being Board.

The Joint Commissioning Unit that is an important bridge between health and social care continues to offer an important service to ensure that we get the care pathway right for our customers. Part of their role has been to develop the local market and this has now been further enhanced with the recently published Market Position Statements which flag up what we will need to meet future care needs in the Borough.

The reprovion programme, which I highlighted in my annual report last year, brings adults with Learning Disabilities back from residential care out of the Borough into supported living accommodation in the Walsall. This work continues though the numbers are now slightly slowing down as it may take longer to support someone appropriately through the change process. We continue to offer a varied day care programme and helping people into employment who have either a learning difficulty or are within the autism spectrum. Our shared-lives accommodation scheme continues to thrive for people with learning disabilities who want to live within a family environment.

Our partnership agreement with the Mental Health Trust still acts as a strong basis for our joint working. We continue to offer good quality mental health services across

Walsall for those with higher levels of the illness when they are living in the community. Our focus continues to be on developing the recovery model in Walsall to help people get the right support and develop the right networks to enable them to better manage their own condition. There has been much debate about the model of care and some of this has focussed on the future of the residential unit at Broadway North. One of the good things to have come out of that debate is a renewed commitment from the Council to work closely with those people who use mental health services in developing and designing services for the future.

Partnerships continue to be developed with the community and voluntary sector. Particularly helpful discussions have happened with Walsall Housing Group around our older people's housing strategy and with other key partners such as the newly formed "Healthwatch" organisation which has a statutory role to represent the public and service users in our future planning. Many other voluntary organisations continue to play a vital role in delivering a range of commissioned services in the Borough.

Partnership working with the CCG has continued on the issues of quality in care. All the residential and nursing care homes have been audited and there have been specific investments in care homes to improve the day to day real experiences of residents; two conferences on "Dignity in Care" addressed by the Leader of the council, training for care managers in nursing homes and residential care homes, work with the third sector to sample the views of care home residents, and work regionally to bench mark care quality across the black country.

All of these service areas are experiencing some budget pressures. The projected savings that were set in the budget for both learning disabled and mental health services have not been delivered (in part because of increasing demands). In addition, prices in the domiciliary care market have continued to rise during the year which has impacted on Council Budgets. The prices were very low and have now risen to a level which is closer to the regional average but budgetary provision has not been made for this. This does mean that at this point in the financial year a £4 million overspend is being reported.

In October the Directorate were reviewed by a Peer Challenge Group made up from Senior Managers and Service Users (called Experts by Experience) from West Midlands Authorities. The report will be published once it is completed and an action plan produced for cabinet. The overall tenor of the report recognises the severe financial challenges that the Council faces (along with all other councils) but praises the development of the new operational model as an approach to meet these challenges. We will be able to discuss this report in full when it is published.

Adult Social Care and inclusion has experienced a very challenging year. It started with the suspension of the Director and two Senior Officers and I am personally grateful for the Interim Director and the Senior Managers in Adult Social Care for the work they have done to keep social care safe and delivering good services in the Borough. Finally I would state my thanks to all staff in the Directorate - this has been a difficult and challenging time for adult social care. I am pleased to note that compliments for our services continue to rise as complains have remained low. We will continue to learn from complaints but are encouraged that many of our customers are satisfied with the service we offer, taking the time and trouble to write and tell us.

Councillor B. McCracken,
Portfolio holder for Social care
11th November 2013