
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 10.15am by video conference on Thursday, 12 November 2020

Present:

County Councillors:

J Chandler (Chairman)
J Baker (Vice Chairman)
B Egan (Vice Chairman)
C Guglielmi
J Lumley
P May
R Pratt
J Reeves (substitute)
P Reid
C Souter
M Steptoe (items 1-4 only)
L Wagland

Sharon Westfield de Cortez from Healthwatch Essex, Joanna Boaler, Democratic Services Manager, Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer and Gemma Bint, Democratic Services Officer, were also present throughout.

1. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report on Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received and noted. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Durham (for whom Councillor Reeves was substituting), Deakin, Hardware and Emma Rigler, Co-opted Member.

No declarations of interest were made.

Minutes

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 08 October 2020 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Questions from the public

There were no questions from the public.

4. Essex Safeguarding Adults Board - Update

The Committee considered report PAF/23/20. The following joined the meeting to introduce the update and support the discussion:

Paul Bedwell, Board Manager Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB)
Fiona Davis, Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance (Adults)
Deborah Stuart-Angus, Independent Chair ESAB
Jane Foster-Taylor, Chief Nurse Thurrock CCG (Mental health
commissioning lead across all Essex Clinical Commissioning Groups)

Contributors provided the Committee with an annual update on the work and priorities of the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB), the update included:

- The structure of the ESAB
- The links with other partnership boards
- The ESAB Annual Report
- The ESAB Strategic Plan 2021-24
- The impact of Covid-19

During discussion the following was highlighted and/or noted:

- The new independent chairman had asked for a strategy and governance refresh upon taking up post and these were underway. It was acknowledged that connectivity with other boards was not as strong as could be and further work on that was required to prevent siloed working.
- Members queried how ESAB evidenced gaining assurance on an issue or concern citing hospital discharge as an example. In future this would be through a self-assessment framework with each partner asked questions and required to provide evidence. During 2019-20 the Board had held themes-based meetings which asked partners to share experience to triangulate evidence and whether concerns remained. There was a SAR underway which was looking at how agencies worked with hospitals on patient discharge.
- The Board had been assured that there were plans to increase capacity and reduce the backlog of deprivation of liberty safeguards assessments.
- The local Covid recovery framework involving statutory agencies and local councils was considered to have worked well. It was hoped that the closer working between health bodies and social care during the pandemic would help the further integration of care models in the future. Multi-disciplinary care home hubs had been developed during the pandemic which seemed to have worked well.
- It had been challenging in ensuring that care homes had sufficient PPE during the pandemic. This had been complicated by changes in government guidance, but the Board now had assurance that it was in place.

- Members highlighted the decrease in the number of domestic abuse referrals during the lockdown and queried whether more could have been done by the board and partners to highlight ways to refer and make the process easier and improve the number of 'safe places'. It was acknowledged that there had been some learning during the pandemic on this and would be reflected in an updated domestic abuse strategy.
- Possibly a more robust regime in reporting abuse in care homes may give a false inflated impression of the concentration of cases in an environment that actively encouraged the reporting of concerns. Reporting of abuse in the wider community may not be happening to the same extent.
- It was recognised that transition from children's services to adult services remained an issue. It was one of the strategic priorities of the board.

Conclusion:

Members requested further information to be circulated providing a breakdown of data on abuse at home – members were keen to see data for family members, and service (such as domiciliary care) providers. This data may be useful for an ongoing Task and Finish Group review of domiciliary care.

The Chairman thanked the contributors for their attendance and they then left the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11.52am and reconvened at 12 noon.

5. Adult Community Learning Update

The Committee considered report PAF/23/20 providing Members with a further update to reflect the new additional challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Ray Gooding, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Katherine Burns, Adult Community Learning Principal joined the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions. During the discussion the following was acknowledged, highlighted and/or noted:

- Recruitment for apprenticeships was back to the same level as it was this time last year.
- Most courses had been offered digitally. As a result of this, people were able to continue with their formal studies and 97% of those completed their accredited course.

- From September some courses had returned to face to face delivery with strict social distancing measures in place. These were particularly aimed at Adults with learning difficulties.
- Due to lockdown, it was acknowledged that the digital service offer had been successful and that it would be good to continue to develop the digital services in the future and continue to provide a programme of online courses.
- ACL had recently connected with the Meaningful Lives Matter team and it had also been agreed to bring Essex Cares Limited into strategy and planning conversations to ensure the work and joint aims aligned and was not being duplicated. Throughout lockdown adults with learning difficulties were contacted regularly to ensure they still felt connected and was receiving work.
- It was stressed that it was still intended to offer non accredited courses, courses aimed at those 'stepping back into' formal education, together with more formal qualifications.
- A concern was raised in regard to what courses there are for people who are on a lower income. It was noted that some courses were free. Those that wanted to do an accredited course could apply for the discretionary learner support fund and some courses were fully funded depending on qualifications. Members also highlighted that travel and parking costs could also be a financial challenge for some people.
- Work had been undertaken to collaborate more with libraries and look for opportunities to co-locate. Harlow town centre library was the first to co-locate with ACL moving into the current library space in the Harlow town centre.
- ACL had been added to the NHS' list of potential suppliers for training and had recently been given approval to provide three schemes. An increase of health-related courses was now being offered.
- The Family Learning team worked with schools to identify those that might need help with parenting skills and Family learning courses were designed to bolster people's confidence.

Conclusion:

It was agreed that the following further information should be circulated to members:

- (i) To provide the numbers in ACL employment.
- (ii) To provide a copy of the Fair Fee Policy.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet member and Lead Officer for their update, and they left the meeting.

6. Domiciliary Care – Task and Finish Group

The Committee considered report PAF/25/20 and **agreed** to endorse the draft Scoping Document which would be used to frame the review of domiciliary care.

7. Work Programme

The Committee considered and noted report PAF/26/20 comprising the current work programme for the Committee.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Monday 7 December 2020.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1.07 pm.

Chairman