
Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 9.30am on Thursday, 7 December 2023 in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford.

Present:

County Councillors:

Cllr Ray Gooding (Chairman)

Cllr Marie Goldman

Cllr Carlo Guglielmi (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Eddie Johnson (left at the end of item 4)

Cllr Daniel Land

Cllr Sue Lissimore

Cllr Peter May (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Aidan McGurran (left the meeting at 10.40am during agenda item 4)

Cllr Ross Playle

Cllr Michael Skeels

Cllr Wendy Stamp

Cllr Mike Steel

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer and Gemma Bint, Democratic Services Officer were also present throughout the meeting.

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report on Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received and noted.

Apologies had been received from Cllr Ian Grundy and Sharon Westfield de Cortez from Healthwatch Essex.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 October 2023 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Questions from the public

There were none.

4 Adult Social Care Priority Area of Focus – People Waiting

The Committee considered report PAF/24/23. The following attended the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions:

- Cllr John Spence, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and ICS Integration
- Alison Ansell, Director of Adult Social Care
- Nick Presmeg, Executive Director, Adult Social Care.

As part of introducing the update, the following was outlined/highlighted:

- (i) Apologies were given for the need to withdraw this agenda item from the previous meeting at short notice. This had been considered necessary as some inaccuracies with some of the data in the agenda report had been identified after publication of the agenda papers. The data had now been updated and verified.
- (ii) Five Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection pilots had taken place across the country including near neighbours Suffolk. Through its own preparatory work for a future CQC inspection, ECC considered that it benchmarked favourably against the inspection pilots undertaken and ECC would continue working with Suffolk and other relevant authorities who had gone through this process to identify any further learning.
- (iii) People Waiting had been a service aspect that had been highlighted for further improvement as a result of the LGA-led peer review and mock inspection of ECC's Adult Social Care earlier in the year.
- (iv) The approach was to understand who was on the waiting lists, to prioritise assessing against risk and need and to keep cases constantly keep under review. ASC had worked to reduce the waiting lists and had made substantive progress over the last 18 months.
- (v) The meaning of 'people waiting' for the purposes of this particular area of service improvement was outlined. It referred to people waiting for a Care Act Assessment, peer review or Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards assessment (DoLS) to be completed by Adult Social Care. It was confirmed that people waiting for a formal assessment had access to information and guidance and would still have a package of support in place as an interim measure.
- (vi) Recent history was outlined including the impact of Covid on Adult Social Care services nationally. The CQC State of Care Report in 2022/23 had recognised that waiting lists across the country were high. The pandemic had triggered new discharge guidance from the Government whereby a comprehensive needs assessment now would be undertaken after people had left the hospital rather than in a hospital setting. Nationally the rate of new requests for support had increased by 5% and waiting lists had been highlighted as a priority area nationally.
- (vii) In Essex there had been a significant demographic growth in both older people and adults with complex needs. The increase in the number of DoLS assessments being required had been higher than expected.
- (viii) The position in Essex and important key aspects were outlined and assurance given that no one would wait to receive care. Essex focused on keeping people living independently at home if possible.

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- (ix) Local performance review meetings took place that fed into the Operations Board and weekly oversight meetings for Service Directors
 - (x) 81% of outstanding Care Act assessments were people waiting for less than 100 days. Those waiting longer than 100 days had been dip sampled and for the vast majority of those cases it was an administrative task that had been required in order to complete the assessment. It was stressed that the number of the longest waits had been reduced.
 - (xi) The current position on the Occupational Therapy services was outlined and the role of the Independent Workforce Team was highlighted.
 - (xii) The current picture and work underway for DoLS assessments were outlined including that DoLS assessments could be prioritised in different ways and that there was currently a backlog of 15 months. However, oversight of the process remained high and there were plans in place to continue with some of the current approaches to reduce the backlog.

During subsequent discussion, the following was highlighted, raised and/or noted:

- (xiii) Staff recruitment was a challenge. Offering additional enhancements to some staff was being considered to keep newly trained and qualified staff for longer as there was a high turnover rate. There was a training programme available through the Essex Social Care Academy.
- (xiv) ECC ASC was broadly operating with the same size workforce as a few years ago over the last 5/6 years there had been a small reduction of people in long-term support but a big increase in people in short-term support which had contributed to some assessment review rates dropping as the Council managed a balance between conducting annual (re) assessments and conducting new assessments .
- (xv) Essex Adult Social Care worked closely alongside hospitals including the Discharge to Assess teams and the Integrated Discharge teams to ensure that people had the right short-term care and placements organised before they left hospital.
- (xvi) Members queried whether the new discharge process of assessing people outside of hospital was the best approach. Officers confirmed it was a good process when working well as could facilitate better long-term family decisions being made. ASC had invested heavily in the reablement market which had resulted in Essex having one of the lowest residential admission rates in the country.
- (xvii) Care Act assessments were undertaken separately to financial assessments. People could only be charged once the financial assessment had been completed. In the meantime, guidance was available to help people work out likely approximate future costs if they

were assessed as having to pay for their own care and the availability of payment plans. Financial assessments could take up to six weeks to complete and could be an ongoing process running alongside receiving some care support in the meantime. Care at home (including domiciliary care) after coming out of hospital was usually free for up to 6 weeks.

- (xviii) People who had very low levels of support and were a low priority were still on record and kept in contact with.
- (xix) 8% of people waiting were categorised as Priority 1 and waiting an average of 42 days, 84% were Priority 2 waiting an average of 56 days and 8% of people were Priority 3 and waited on average 120 days. These cases were reviewed regularly to ensure support was still provided whilst they were waiting.
- (xx) Unitary councils often appeared to be performing better than larger councils due to the geographical scale and structural differences.
- (xxi) District/borough councils had lead responsibility and administered Disabled Facilities Grants but ECC occupational therapists supported that process.
- (xxii) Supported accommodation for those with learning disabilities could provide that cohort with a much better quality of life. Discussions would continue with district/borough councils and other partners to encourage provision was built into Local Plans.

Conclusion:

It was **agreed** that the following should be further considered:

- (i) faith-based reviews to be included on the definitions page in the report;
- (ii) that the challenges ASC faced should be highlighted within the executive summary of future reports such as 1 in 5 adults in Essex were 65 and people with learning disabilities and autism cohorts was expected to grow significantly by 2025.
- (iii) It was highlighted that the 3 year overdue reference within the report related to Care Act reviews and not initial assessments. Members were concerned this could be misleading and suggested it was made clearer in future reports.
- (iv) Future performance reports to the Committee should focus more on a narrative in a traditional written report rather than over reliance on power point presentations.

The meeting adjourned at 11.00am and reconvened at 11.13am.

5 Adult Social Care Priority area of focus: Co-Production

The Committee considered report PAF/25/23. The following attended the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions:

- Cllr John Spence, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and ICS Integration
- Nick Presmeg, Executive Director, Adult Social Care
- Jon Dickinson, Director, Adult Social Care
- Chris Martin, Director for Strategic Commissioning & Policy (C&F)
- Emily Oliver, Head of Strategic Commissioning & Policy

During the discussion, the following was highlighted, raised and/or noted:

- (i) Co-production was working with others in an equal partnership and include people and communities who used care and health services to design future services. This recognised that people with 'lived experience' were often best placed to shape and advise what would make a positive difference in their lives.
- (ii) Work had taken place with Essex Cares Limited with over 300 people with learning disabilities and Autism, and their families, in a variety of workshops to look at how employment opportunities could be increased.
- (iii) The 'ladder of co-production' involved seven stages towards true co-production. ASC considered that there were some good examples of where it had engaged well and co-designed services with stakeholders.
- (iv) Getting a 'foot in the door' was sometimes a challenge when a person resisted the offer of support. Persistence and working patiently and diligently in partnership with communities and other services, for example Environmental Health or GPs, could help with getting that foot in the door.
- (v) Some co-production work did take place in the policymaking stage as well as in the later stages however this could always be further improved.
- (vi) The CQC would want to know how well ASC listened to other organisations who could better represent lived experience of service users. It was acknowledged that this could be a challenge as ASC were set up to some extent in a paternalistic way and constrained by its responsibilities within the legal, regulatory and budgetary framework.
- (vii) It was important to build accessibility and structures for people to communicate directly with ASC with their care needs and feedback, in an authentic and inclusive way to make a difference to future service delivery.
- (viii) The 'Great Expectations' initiative had taken place a few years ago where young people with learning disabilities were asked what they wanted in their lives. Their feedback was that they wanted to live as independently as possible, be visible in their community and make a contribution. As a result of this the 100-day Challenge was set up. The

subsequent contract with ECL turned into a vocational employment focused service which resulted in approximately 340 people with learning disabilities having more meaningful lives in employment.

- (ix) Work continued with getting employers to be more open to offering employment opportunities to people with learning disabilities.
- (x) A Member highlighted that local employment in the Dengie was a challenge and needed to be addressed. Cllr Spence suggested he would reach out to Essex Chambers of Commerce to see whether they could hold a similar employment session to the one they had recently held in Colchester.
- (xi) Members sought examples of where ECC had conducted co-production at policy making stage.
- (xii) ECC had a wider advocacy role as well and there still remained work to do to get the whole Council thinking about this as part of co-production.

Conclusion

It was agreed that the 'Statement of Intent' referred to during discussion be brought to the Committee once developed for comment and review and to understand any actions that arose from it.

6 Performance Monitoring falling within Committee's remit, as reported to the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee considered and discussed report PAF/26/23 comprising the latest performance update for the Everyone's Essex – Our Plan for Levelling Up the County: 2021-2025 strategy which are considered quarterly by the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee. It was agreed that a report would be brought to the Committee on the progress of Family Solutions.

7 Work Programme

The Committee considered and discussed report PAF/27/23 comprising the work programme for the Committee. An appropriate mechanism and process to follow up on outstanding recommendations from the Mental Health Task and Finish Group would be raised at Scrutiny Board in the first instance.

8 Matters Arising

The Committee considered and discussed report PAF/28/23 comprising outstanding matters arising from previous meetings.

9 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday 11 January 2023.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.25pm.

Chairman