

**Minutes of the meeting of the Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held virtually via video conference on Wednesday 13 January 2021 at 10:30am**

**Present**

Cllr Jill Reeves (Chairman)	Cllr June Lumley
Cllr Anne Brown	Cllr Bob Massey
Cllr Jenny Chandler	Cllr Clive Souter
Cllr Tony Edwards	Cllr Mark Stephenson
Cllr Beverley Egan (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr Mike Steptoe
Cllr Dave Harris	Cllr Andy Wood (Vice-Chairman)

**Other Members**

Cllr John Baker	Cllr Mark Durham
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**Others present**

Sharon Westfield de Cortez  
(Healthwatch Essex)

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The following officers were supporting the meeting:

Richard Buttress, Democratic Services Manager

Sophie Champion, Democratic Services Officer

**1. Membership, apologies and declarations**

The Committee noted a change of membership from Maldon District Council. Cllr Brian Beale has replaced Cllr Michael Helm as its representative on the HOSC.

No apologies for absence were received.

The following Declarations of Interest were made:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Interest</b>
Cllr Anne Brown	Son is a surgeon at Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Cllr Beverley Egan	Cousin is the Managing Director of the Basildon University Hospital

**2. Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 2 December 2020 were approved by the committee as an accurate record.

**3. Questions from the public**

No questions from members of the public were received.

#### **4. Autism Services**

The Committee received report HOSC/01/21, comprising of an update on Autism Services across Essex. The Committee agreed on a scope that included referral and diagnosis times, transitions between children and adult services, the total number of people affected by Autism across Essex and the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had specifically on Children's Autism Services.

The Committee received the following updates:

Chris Martin, Director of Strategic Commissioning and Policy (C&F) and Michelle Brown, Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy, covering the following key issues:

- There is a wide array of partners across ECC and NHS. This is illustrative of the approach being taken across Essex to help people with autism
- It is recognised that within Essex, there is more work to be done on all elements of autism
- There is an Autism Board, which is chaired by Andrew Hensman
- Diagnostic pathways are helpful for young people and their families. The pathway itself does not lead to a wide offer of support. Help and support is the most important element
- Autism is a lifelong disability and affects how people communicate with the world
- Autism is a spectrum condition and the impact can range. Some may need 24-hour care and others may be less impacted
- All Age Autism Strategy was launched in April 2020 and has been endorsed by the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board. Essex wants to be recognised as an autism supportive County
- All Age Autism Joint Commissioner's Forum was established on diagnosis, assessment and support and includes colleagues from Southend and Thurrock
- There has been an increase in people seeking a diagnosis around autism
- ECC is working with each CCG colleague to arrange a longer-term joint service arrangement from April 2021 onwards
- Further work is being undertaken to align with the children's diagnosis pathway
- A Covid-19 autism survey was undertaken via the Essex All Age Autism Partnership; 88% of respondents indicated that disruption of routine was the main impact of the pandemic, followed by anxiety of the unknown and poor sleep. Positives were identified at not having to attend school
- Essex Wellbeing Services continues to provide support to Essex residents.

Ralph Holloway, Head of SEND Strategy and Innovations, covering the following key issues:

- There are currently 10,108 people with an EHCP in Essex, with over a third listing autism as their primary need

- ECC currently has 22,518 pupils receiving SEN support, with 9% having autism listed as their primary need
- Looking to build effective and positive relationships with schools
- Some schools do not always have an environment that is adaptive to those with autism needs
- New schools in Chelmsford and Witham are opening to support people with severe autism
- Are exploring options around future delivery to make sure there is an effective offer for children with autism in schools.

Eugene Staunton, Deputy Director Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG, covering the following key issues:

- Recently awarded contract to EPUT who will be picking up the contract from April 2021.

Hitesh Raval, Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust, covering the following key issues:

- There have been fewer referrals than anticipated since March 2020
- Still able to carry out observational components of assessments, albeit mostly virtually. Some face to face assessments are being completed
- There is an average 10 month wait from assessment to assessment

Sharon Allison, Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, covering the following key issues:

- There has been an uptake of groups since March 2020
- They are looking at short-term and long-term plans
- It has been really useful to offer people virtual appointments and will look to continue this post Covid-19.

Sarah Garner, West Essex CCG, covering the following key issues:

- Following an Ofsted inspection there are a number of areas that needed to be improved
- A lot of work has progressed at pace since September 2020, including Journey of Autism Diagnosis and Early Support (JADES), which is a neurodevelopment transformation project and has been extended to 2020/21
- Some parents are still requesting face to face appointments
- Waiting time in West Essex is six weeks and eighteen weeks in Mid and South Essex and North East Essex. This is being monitored through joint commissioning work that is being undertaken with ECC
- Working on the development of MDT work streams in each quadrant.

During the discussion the following key points were noted:

- Currently it takes six weeks from referral to assessments, with most appointments virtual as families do not need to travel

- Waiting times depends on the needs, which can sometimes be up to 12 months
- It is not possible to provide a comparison on waiting times compared to other authorities, although waiting times are fairly comparable
- Schools receive a financial incentive from taking children who have an EHCP
- There are more children with special needs in mainstream schools than in special schools
- Adults who are diagnosed with autism are able to give a helpful insight into what life is like
- Quite often, parents with autistic children then realise they may have needs themselves and seek support.

After discussion, it was **Resolved** that:

- i) The HOSC invited a further update on Autism Services, both adults and children's, in around six months' time.

#### **5. Chairman's Report**

The Committee noted report HOSC/02/21. Between this meeting and the previous HOSC meeting, no Chairman's Forum meetings were held and therefore no update was available.

#### **6. Member Updates**

The Committee considered and noted report HOSC/03/21.

#### **7. Work Programme**

The committee considered report HOSC/04/21 and the current work programme was noted by the committee.

#### **8. Date of next meeting**

To note that the next committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 10 February 2021 at 10:30am.

#### **9. Urgent business**

No urgent business was received.

#### **10. Urgent exempt business**

No urgent exempt business was received.

The meeting closed at 12:25pm.

**Chairman**