

Health Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 31st March, 2021.

Present:- Councillors Sandhu (Chair), Smith (Vice-Chair), Ali, Begum and Mohammad

Also present:- Councillor Dhaliwal

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Rasib

PART I

53. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Mohammad declared that she was a Practice Manager at a GP Surgery in Slough. She remained present for the duration of the meeting.

54. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 14th January 2021

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

55. Member Questions

None received.

56. Situation Report - Verbal Update on Covid-19 Situation in Slough

The Service Lead Public Health gave a presentation to the Panel, providing an overview of the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic in Slough.

The Panel noted the following:

- The rate of cases had been fluctuating and the number of daily positive cases in Slough remained above the South East average, with a positivity rate of 2.8%.
- Slough's national ranking remained low at 68. Case rates were slightly higher in comparison to neighbouring local authorities.
- Vaccinations were being rolled out at the JMIC mosque and 50 vaccinations had been given on the first day. Appointments were available every Wednesday between 10.00am-6.00pm.
- Negotiations were ongoing for a mobile vaccination site.
- Research had been commissioned with Royal Holloway to provide insight into vaccine concerns in the borough. Further research would be carried out into vaccine take up among Eastern European residents

Panel Members made a number of comments which included clarification regarding the process for registering results of tests. It was explained that

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for lateral flow tests, there was an app to register the results of home testing. National Covid data was then collected via the app. For community testing, results would be logged by staff at the site.

In response to what steps had been taken to reach out to communities who had reservations about getting the vaccination, it was noted that officers were looking into liaising with community groups such as the Polish Club. Nationally, the Afro-Caribbean community fallen behind in terms of vaccination take-up and research conducted by Royal Holloway had highlighted people's concerns regarding the safety of the vaccine, its make up, the speed of development of the vaccine and the requirement to provide personal information to have the vaccine. These concerns and how to best to address them was being looked into.

A Member asked whether Slough's population profile was a cause for additional concern, given that Slough had a large number of young people many of whom were not yet vaccinated. The importance of following Covid restrictions and safety measures should continue to be emphasised to younger people. It had been suggested that the death rate following discharge from hospital was high and the Panel were informed that there was no data available regarding the death rate following hospital discharges. The Service Lead, Public Health undertook to provide any such data to Members once it became available.

Referring specifically to the new variant, a Member asked whether there was any data to show that the transmission rates had increased following the re-opening of schools. Infection rates at schools were being monitored and daily updates of cases provided. Pupils, staff and families were being encouraged to carry out home testing.

It was agreed that data on the total number of vaccinations given in Slough would be circulated to the Panel.

At the conclusion of the discussion the status report was noted.

Resolved: That the update report be noted.

57. Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2019/20

The Panel received details of the Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2019/2020 which were presented by David Peplow, the Independent Scrutineer for the Safeguarding Partnership.

An overview of the report and context about process was outlined, which included statutory changes to reporting and structural changes to how Slough's Safeguarding Partnership was operating; noting that strategic leadership had strengthened and changed whilst duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults had remained and consistently delivered.

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Overall, the report showed that for the 2019/2020 period the Partnership had been stable, was working well and had adapted well to remote working. However, it was difficult to evaluate from the data alone what real difference the work of the Partnership had made to the experiences of a young person or a vulnerable adult. Future reports would seek to better articulate what difference the Partnership made to those experiencing violence, exploitation or self-neglect.

All data shared with the Partnership was closely scrutinised through the usual rigorous internal governance processes of each of the agencies. There were some areas of statutory reporting, and of particular note was the impact of training. Case reviews for both Adults and Children had been challenging due to significant process changes. The tables listed a number of positive results for 2019/2020 period. Data for the 2020/2021 period was currently being collated. The headline findings and statements had been based on the Six Steps to Scrutiny developed by the University of Bedford.

The Panel discussed a range of issues and in particular noted that previously, Children's Services had been criticised for its lack of support to those transitioning from care. It was explained that there were significant differences in the statutory provisions applicable to children and adults. However, Slough was working with a range of agencies to embed good practice and preventative work was being undertaken to ensure the best possible outcomes for service users.

The Executive Director People (Adults) stated that the team had wanted to focus on Slough and provide a broader view. The criteria of provision of services for adults was narrower than that for children and this was due to funding available and the provisions of the Care Act. This was a challenge faced by many local authorities. The Social Care Transformation Programme included a work stream 'preparing for adulthood' aimed at improving the transition of young people between Children and Adult Services.

A Member asked for details regarding the rise in incidences relating to modern slavery and self-neglect. The Panel was informed that greater public awareness, understanding and reporting of such matters, including self referrals, had contributed to an upward trend.

A Member sought clarification as to what the independent Scrutineer hoped to achieve at Slough. The independent Scrutineer stated that his main role was to evaluate the current arrangements within the Partnership. In his view, the main area of deficit was assessing what difference the Partnership made to the experiences of vulnerable young people and adults with needs.

Councillor Dhaliwal, speaking under Rule 30, expressed concern at the increase in the incidences of modern slavery, self-neglect, financial and psychological abuse and whether the pandemic had contributed to the increase. The Executive Director People (Adults) advised that the data in the annual report was pre-Covid and related to the 2019/2020 financial year.

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However, as lockdown restrictions eased, the service expected to see an increase in the reporting of self-neglect.

Resolved - That details of the report be noted.

58. Adult Social Care Strategy and Budget

The Committee received a report the delivery of the adult social care strategy, the expected outturn for 2020/21, the proposed budget for adult social services in Slough in 2021/2022 and a summary of the new adult social care transformation programme.

The Panel received a presentation and the Executive Director People (Adults) highlighted the following points:

Adult Social Care Strategy: The past year had been one of increased challenge for adult social care – particularly the impact of the pandemic on those living in care homes. Staff in this area had demonstrated resilience, patience and determination to continue to support some of the most vulnerable people. Key achievements were summarised.

Financial Position of Adult Social Care (ASC) 2020/21: The budget for ASC 2020/21 was circa £40m. The forecast outturn was an approximately £3m overspend with the impact of the pandemic accounting for £2m of that overspend. Councils nationally were facing similar pressures and an announcement from central government was awaited with proposals for the sustainable future funding of ASC.

Adult Social Care Proposed Savings and Growth 2021/22: In recognition of the significant financial pressures on service delivery a new ASC Transformation Programme was being developed and areas of growth and savings had been agreed for 2021/22. A summary of the agreed growth areas and savings were outlined.

Adult Social Care Transformation Programme 2021/24: The key areas included:

- Communications and Engagement
- Practice development – including strength-based working, locality working, personalisation, joint funding arrangements with the NHS, a new agreement for integrated mental health services
- Market management – including development of a new shared lives scheme, day opportunities redesign, improvements in the purchasing of care, costs of care and developing a range of accommodation options to support people to live independently in the community.
- Preparation for adulthood – improving the outcomes for young people with social care needs as they move into adult services.
- Targeted interventions – deep dives into the reablement service and internal provider services.

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- Digital and IT - linked to the wider ambitions of the Council to be digital by default

It was noted that business cases were being developed to confirm the specific actions for each of the workstreams and confirmation of the savings levels that would be delivered over the coming years.

In the ensuing discussion Members asked a number of questions including whether the agreed savings were achievable. The Executive Director People (Adults) explained that achieving the savings would likely be extremely challenging, due to the uncertain position in relation ASC moving forward following the pandemic given concerns about the workforce who were stretched and expecting an increase in new areas of work and risks relating to sustainability and costs from service providers. The options proposed were reasonable, however, the final figure was subject to change and this had been highlighted as a risk in the budget.

A Member queried whether funding from Central Government been sufficient to allow the Council to fulfil its responsibilities. It was noted that additional funding provided as a result of the pandemic would not be given in future grants from the government but service demand would remain and therefore contingency funds had been earmarked.

Responding to whether family members could provide care and receive direct payment it was clarified that direct payment rules disallowed family members from receiving funds except in exceptional circumstances such as Covid. As the pandemic receded this would no longer be possible.

Resolved - That details of the report be noted.

59. Update on change in Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service

The Chair advised that the report was for information purposes only and would be further discussed at the forthcoming Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

60. Members Attendance Record 2020/21

Resolved – That details of the Members' Attendance Record 2020/21 be noted.

61. Date of Next Meeting - 30th June 2021

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 30th June 2021.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30pm and closed at 7.55pm)

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