

SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Friday, 21 May 2021

PRESENT: Councillor G. Thomas (Chair)

Councillors:

S.M. Allen, K.V. Broom, I.W. Davies, K.Davies, R.E. Evans, J.D. James (In place of A.L. Fox), M.J.A. Lewis, K. Lloyd, K. Madge, B.A.L. Roberts, E.M.J.G. Schiavone, D. Thomas (In place of W.T. Evans) and D.T. Williams

Also in attendance:

Councillor J. Tremlett, Executive Board Member for Social Care and Health

The following Officers were in attendance:

A. Bracey, Head of Social Care
A. Williams, Head of Integrated Services
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator
M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer

Virtual Meeting - 10.30 am - 12.20 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors W.T. Evans, A.L. Fox and B.A.L. Roberts.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.

Councillor	Minute No (s)	Nature of Interest
Kevin Madge	4. Mental Health Update Report	Daughter works in Social Care.

There were no declarations of any prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

[**NOTE:** The Chair advised the Committee that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2(3) she was going to vary the order of business on the agenda to enable agenda item 4 – Mental Health Update to be considered as the last agenda item].

4. MENTAL HEALTH UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered a report providing a position statement regarding the impact of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing and highlighting the service priorities and developments going forward.

The Executive Board Member for Health and Social Care highlighted that the Authority was investing in Mental Health and had increased staff capacity utilising the funding approved by Council. It was noted that collaborative work was being undertaken with the third sector and Hywel Dda University Health Board to develop a Single Point of Contact for mental health services. Additionally, the roll out of the Twilight Sanctuary service was continuing across the West Wales region.

It was noted that Covid was continuing to take its toll on mental health and wellbeing and that the lasting effects would be felt by many. It was acknowledged that we were yet to reach the peak of the mental health crisis and that prioritising mental health had never been more critical.

The following questions/observations were raised on the report: -

- It was asked how the Authority would cope with the increasing demand for mental health services.
The Committee was advised that additional staffing, new initiatives, and joint working would help the Authority manage the increasing demand and that the emphasis would be on joint working to improve the available provision.
- Reference was made to the 136% increase of contact with the mental health team and that Carmarthenshire was one of the worse authorities for suicide numbers.
The Head of Adult Social Care advised the rural aspect had an impact for men and that this was a priority for the region. It was also stated that it was fortunate that organisations such as the DPJ Foundation and Tir Dewi were also providing support.
- It was asked how much collaboration takes place between the various organisation such as the Police Authority and the Health Board regarding mental health.
The Head of Adult Social Care advised that collaboration was taking place between the various organisations. Work was being undertaken regarding a 24/7 crisis response service which would involve an out of hours service potentially co-located to respond to those in crisis.
- Reference was made to the fact that each year approximately 325 people in Wales die from suicide. It was asked what the trend was in Carmarthenshire and particularly the farming community?
The Head of Adult Social Care advised that Carmarthenshire was 3rd in the table of suicide rate and stated that one of the priorities for the national advisory group was to look at the real time data. The Committee was advised that while Scotland was still higher the figures were reducing and

were also reducing for England, however worryingly this was not the case for Wales. Reassurance was given there were plans to improve early interventions access to service and crisis services would include strategies to respond to the suicide and self-harm in Carmarthenshire.

- Concern was raised regarding the issues with alcohol and drug misuse in the communities.
The Committee was advised that there had been an increase in substance and alcohol about in the last 12 months. The area planning board was undertaking awareness campaigns and that the social workers and substance misuse teams worked closely together to mitigate.
- It was noted that staffing levels had remained relatively stable during the pandemic and staff had demonstrated remarkable resilience. However, concern was expressed regarding staff retention and pressures.
The Head of Adult Social Care acknowledged that the Social Workers had been resilient but were now very tired. Staff wellbeing had been an on-going priority with various pathways of support in place.
- An update was requested regarding the waiting times for referrals as prior to the pandemic there were concerns regarding waiting lists.
Officers informed the Committee that counselling was provided by the Health Board and that unfortunately the waiting list was long. However, Welsh Government was providing additional funding towards this. In addition to counselling, alternative ways of intervention and prevention were being introduced such as the running group work which was piloted in 2019.
- It was asked if data was available regarding the number of people who had visited their GP before committing suicide.
The Committee was advised that the data was not available but many who take their life are not known to services however, some have presented to GPs with other health issues. It was stated that GPs were receiving training and that this was one of the national priorities. It was suggested that Professor Ann John (chair of the National Advisory Group) could update the committee regarding the national priorities.
- It was asked what services were in place to assist people with dealing with bereavement.
The Head of Integrated services advised that there had been some developments including investment from Welsh Government during the pandemic. The Committee was advised that there were areas of good practice such as Ty Bryngwyn and Ty Cymorth but that support was not consistent across the region. A review was currently being undertaken by the Health Board of palliative care, and bereavement services would be looked at as part of this.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

5. SOCIAL CARE & HEATH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2021/22

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme for 2021/22, which had been prepared in accordance with the Council's Constitution which required Scrutiny Committees to develop and publish annual forward work programmes identifying issues and reports to be considered at meetings during the course of the municipal year.

It was suggested that an update on day services provision be included in the development session on the 7th July, 2021.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme for the Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee for 2021/22 be confirmed.

6. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 7th July, 2021 be noted.

7. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 20TH APRIL, 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 20th April, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE