

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

13 November 2019

CARE AND INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Mental Health: Implementation and Pathway

1. Mental Health Services are under huge pressure. Over recent years we have seen a very welcome increase in political support and a stronger recognition that mental health as a service has lagged behind many others. Increasingly it is recognised how important it is that we have parity of esteem for mental health. Yet it appears that, nationwide, we are still some way off this aim. It was, therefore, encouraging to learn of the steps that taken locally to implement a distinctive social care mental health offer across North Yorkshire for working age adults.
2. Social care and all partners can now follow a clear health pathway from referral into the service, triage and prevention. A restructured mental health service with a clear hierarchy, transparent lines of accountability and, significantly, an integrated care workforce team, strengthens this approach.
3. The expected benefits are more than just increased confidence that we are statutory compliant – crucial though that is - because there is a stronger prevention offer at the front door, we can expect to see a reduction in the number of people requiring specialist mental health services. The pathways also set out a clear process of best practice to be followed in the treatment of a patient or client with a particular condition or with particular needs. Where there is a social care need identified, the impact of a crisis for an individual will be minimised
4. These new care pathways are designed to level up services so that individuals and patients all receive the best standard of care available.

Living Well

5. Prevention and the concept of preventative services have become increasingly prominent in health and social care policy in recent years. With North Yorkshire's ageing population and the growing number of people with long term conditions placing a strain on the health and social care, reducing demand for high intensity and high cost services will be key.
6. The Authority has a track record of committing to prevention services. An integral part of our preventative offer is the Living Well Project which works with individuals

and their carers who are isolated, vulnerable, bereaved, lacking confidence, or perhaps on the borderline of needing health and social care services. Instead, the service helps them to access their local community, and support them to find their own solutions to their health and wellbeing goals. This helps to reduce loneliness and isolation, and to prevent or resolve issues for people, including preventing hospitalisation.

7. We looked at the findings of an evaluation report. Evidence shows the positive impact of living well for service users in North Yorkshire County Council. Amongst a range of indicators pointing to the project's success one in particular stands out: it delivers improved wellbeing worth £3.84 per every £1 spent.
8. Living Well is a genuine success story. It illustrates how the council has creatively and innovatively deployed public health grant money to further public health and social care objectives.

Assistive Technology

9. The committee likes to take stock periodically of how the County Council uses assistive technology to enable people to live more independent lives for longer. We welcomed the recently entered into partnership arrangement with Nottingham Rehab Services (NRS). There are clear advantages to having moved to one organisation delivering AT services across the county to both adults and children. Rather than having to specify certain pieces of equipment and then relying on our NYCC Occupational Therapists (OT's) to understand and assess, the new contract operates as a direct partnership between NRS and the County Council. By employing their own OTs, who receive referrals from NYCC assessment staff, we can be confident that greater technical expertise is being brought to bear. NRS technical experts are able to identify the most appropriate piece of equipment to support a person's assessed needs and outcomes.
10. It was fascinating to see how a range of solutions from the simple to the most technologically advanced are being used. As just one example, we heard that a soft toy seal called "Yorkie" is being trialled. This is classed as a working robot colleague. This appears to be having a great impact on people with dementia and Alzheimer's. The outcomes have been found to be reduced stress, stimulated interaction between people and carers, and reduced challenging behaviour.
11. Initial results from the new arrangement seem to demonstrate that more people are being supported with a far wider range of equipment, and the contract provider is able to stay much more up-to-date with new and emerging technology.

Budget Position

12. Towards the end of last year, we reviewed the HAS Directorate projected overspend and the action plan that is being taken in response to financial pressures. The main area of overspend remains within the care and support budget which accounts for £133m of a net £157m directorate budget. A predicted overspend of £4.9m. We also recognise that the mental health budget is currently overspending by approximately £400,000 on a budget of £8.5m. Whilst reassured about the action being taken to correct this overspend, we can easily see how the County Council spends such a significant part of its overall budget on these services.

13. Needless to say there is no magic, silver bullet to solve these budget pressures; it is a national funding problem coupled with a huge demographic challenge – especially so in North Yorkshire. We know that managing demand well, and sustaining our commitment to prevention and early intervention, will be key.

Looking ahead

14. Next meeting, we will review how support is provided to adult carers in North Yorkshire, focussing again on respite and short breaks provision.

15. We will pick up on this year's earlier work on the local social care market, including how the Authority can and does intervene.

16. Planning has begun for the committee to review Social Prescribing. Sometimes referred to as community referral, Social Prescribing is a means of enabling GPs, nurses and other primary care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services. Social prescribing schemes can involve a variety of activities which are typically provided by voluntary and community sector organisations. Examples include volunteering, arts activities, group learning, gardening, befriending, cookery, healthy eating advice and a range of sports activities.

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Background Documents - Nil