

North Yorkshire County Council

Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 20 September 2021 at 10am.

Present:-

County Councillor Karin Sedgwick in the Chair.

County Councillors: Eric Broadbent, Mike Chambers MBE, Caroline Goodrick Helen Grant, Stanley Lumley, John Mann, Roberta Swiers and Cliff Trotter.

Co-opted Member Jill Quinn (Dementia Forward)

In attendance:

County Councillors Andrew Lee (Executive Member for Adult Social Care) and Caroline Dickinson (Older Peoples Champion)

Officers: Ray Busby (Principal Scrutiny Support Officer),

Apologies:

County Councillors John Ennis, David Jeffels, Andrew Jenkinson and Robert Windass.
Mike Padgham (Co-opted Member - Independent Care Group)

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

255. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2021 having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

256. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

257. Public Questions or Statements

The committee was advised that no notice had been received of any public questions or statements to be made at the meeting.

258. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman welcomed County Councillor Caroline Dickinson to the meeting and congratulated her on her appointment as the new Older Peoples Champion.

The Chairman then updated members on changes to the work programme she had agreed to.

Since the last meeting, the authority has had a peer challenge of services during the Covid pandemic. The positive feedback, for the Living Well service in particular – an area considered by the committee at the last meeting – was most welcome.

259. Suicide Prevention Update

Considered

Presentation by Claire Robinson (Health Improvement Manager - Suicide Prevention Lead for North Yorkshire) providing an update on data around Covid, with a particular focus on key priorities and including some examples of recent initiatives.

Progress against all priorities remains strong. Members found it especially pleasing that our awareness campaigns and initiatives are helping reduce the stigma associated with suicide, enabling people to talk about suicidal thoughts and emotional distress and increase their help-seeking behaviours.

These initiatives start long before people end up in crisis, to minimise the distress that people experience before they get effective help.

The Chair hoped that the committee could be updated at some point on the Reach project.

John Mann asked:

- if comparative information for the North Yorkshire area was available on the figures for annual suicides in North Yorkshire compare to 30 or 40 years ago. Claire advised that the changes in the way information is recorded, especially by coroners, rendered making comparisons problematic.
- In terms of suicide by District, and the information presented for Harrogate in particular, was it possible to adjust by population. This could be made available to members separately, broken down by district; it is true that North Yorkshire suicide rates per 1000k population are higher than the national average, especially male deaths.

Cllr Helen Grant raised the issue of force veterans. It was confirmed that MoD figures were included in the data presented.

Cllr Grant highlighted self-harming within young people and how this was being tackled. Claire advised guidance was being made available for inclusion in school policy statements. Pat Sowa was also working directly with schools as part of training initiatives. In addition, a new pathway had just been launched.

Cllr Goodrick expressed her concern about suicide prevalence in rural areas and especially in the farming community. Claire confirmed that linkages and multi agency partnership working had been forged with the National Farmers Union. Free training has been offered.

Cllr Plant highlighted the pressure associated with social media and online abuse. Claire acknowledged this “hidden harm”. She could pull out from the data incidences where it is known and stipulated that social media influence was apparent in cases. Cllr Goodrick believed this to be an interesting and important area for debate - the extent to which social media can be an unsettling influence. Perhaps the coroner could enquire, as part of the process, to help bring about an improved

understanding of just how impactful it was. Claire responded that analysis of cases did show that investigations cover social media evidence. However, she would enquire whether the coroner followed this line of enquiry on every occasion rather than, for example, where it had been identified in individual cases as a prior, known factor.

Jill Quinn said that her organisation were talking many more helpline calls during the pandemic from older people expressing low level anxiety, desperation and depression. Claire mentioned the "Assist" training, aimed at staff at just this level of an experience and public contact, which could be accessed by organisations to develop understanding of how best to support people who raise this level of anxiety.

The Chair reminded members that on Wednesday 10th November 2021 public health colleagues will provide members (at the seminar) with information on support for people bereaved by suicide and provide a mental health training taster session. Pat Sowa a HeadFirst trainer, champion for suicide prevention and a mother who lost her son Dom to Suicide in 2017, will deliver this - supported by key officers.

Resolved –

- a) That the report be noted
- b) That a report on progress in relation to the "Reach" and "Just B" project be made to the committee, ideally in six months time

260. Corporate Director of Health and Adult Services Overview

Considered –

Presentation by Richard Webb providing an overview of all issues affecting the Health and Adult Services directorate, mainly focussing on:

- Covid 19 response
- Adult Social Care - Current situation
- Winter 2021/222
- National Policy
- HAS work programmes and priorities

In response to a question from Cllr Caroline Goodrick about vaccine hesitancy, Richard agreed to direct members towards where we publish tips (for staff) about how to manage conversations with people reluctant to come forward for the vaccine. Jill Quinn hoped that formal communication to the voluntary sector could include information of this nature.

Member again expressed their general anxieties and concerns about the funding for social care.

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

261. Work Programme

Considered –

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader on the Work Programme.

The Chair referred to the importance and success of Social Proscribing.

Ray Busby explained that the agenda for the next meeting included a larger than normal number of items

- HAS Financial Pressures.
- Charging for Social Care - Overview.
- Director of Public Health Annual Report.
- Annual North Yorkshire Safeguarding Adults Board Report.
- Local Account.

Members asked that, wherever possible, items be rescheduled to even out the business carried out at each meeting.

Members raised their continuing concerns about staffing levels in the care sector and recruitment pressures generally. An update to members – possibly by the portfolio holder - would be helpful. Moving forward the committee might also benefit by having access to the data we collect on a countywide basis on such issues.

Resolved -

That the work programme be agreed.

The meeting finished at 12.05pm