

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 FEBRUARY 2022

STATEMENT OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR MICHAEL HARRISON

Adult Social Care Pressures

Members will be aware of the considerable workforce pressures the sector is facing, with vacancies in many areas across both the private sector and the council itself. These pressures are reflected nationally, and have been exacerbated by the high infection levels caused by the Covid-19 Omicron variant. With over 100 vacancies across the sector, the challenges have impacted on the flow out of hospitals of people who are medically fit for discharge but who cannot be discharged without access to care, resulting in an increase in hospital discharge delays.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the teams over what has been a most challenging winter to date – both within the council and across 500 care providers. We are currently deploying volunteers from other areas of the council to support front line care delivery. These volunteers will not be undertaking direct care but will be supporting with other tasks and support that frees up established team members to deliver care. I would like to place on record my thanks to the volunteers, and their colleagues, who are supporting them to help us.

Care settings and impact of Covid

We saw more than a doubling of infections within our care settings during January from our previous peak figures because of Omicron, although we can see that infection rates are stabilising. Care settings with outbreaks cannot ordinarily take in new residents so this has further impacted the availability of social care accommodation. Adult Social Care and Public Health colleagues have worked ever more closely to coordinate our response with partners.

As infection levels ease, we expect to see the lifting of most restrictions on visiting, and reduced isolation periods following a COVID-19 infection for those receiving care. The changes will ensure those providing and receiving care are kept safe while increasing freedoms for residents.

Workforce Payments

In January the Executive finalised an agreement with the NHS to make payments to bring forward the 2022 national minimum wage increase to December 2021, resulting in a retention payment to support the workforce totalling c£300 after tax for 16000 front line care workers, which they should receive by the end of March. A grant is also now available for care providers to apply for to support workforce retention and recruitment initiatives. The grant value is on a sliding scale with between £1000 and £40,000 available depending on the size of the provider.

Recruitment Campaign

The second phase of the Make Care Matter recruitment campaign launched in mid January and has included TV, social media, on-demand and print journalism. We have had four prime time/day time TV adverts running on ITV Tyne Tees and Yorkshire. The adverts were filmed in Bedale, Harrogate, Ripon and Seamer and featured local care workers and people who use services.

This further demonstrates the action we are taking to try and address the resourcing issues, but we continue to make it clear that we need a long term solution from central government to properly address these issues.

Ethical Decision Making and Prioritisation

In January, we approved arrangements for Adult Social Care governance and prioritisation in response to the anticipated surge in infections and how that would potentially impact on service delivery across Adult Social Care and the wider health and social care system. Recognising that decisions would need to be made quickly and professionally on areas ranging from deciding how best to meet need, make specific market interventions to ensure that providers can continue to trade, or potentially temporarily closing and consolidating services to meet minimum staff levels to ensure safe services to people. Any decisions will need to be made quickly but need to consider wider issues including the longer term impact on people should they need to move service.

It is expected that there will be significant operational pressures at least up until the end of March 2022 and this position will be continually monitored to ensure there is appropriate decision making throughout the coming months.

Extra Care Update

Despite the directorate pressures, work continues with our strategic extra care schemes, and I am pleased to report that the scheme in Bentham is now at a build stage and is on track to open in 2022. Further tenders will be issued soon for a scheme in Whitby on the hospital site and a range of engagement events have taken place with prospective providers over recent weeks.

Innovation award winners

Finally, in December a number of our teams were recognised in the council's innovation awards, and I would like to recognise these achievements:

- **Police Referral Screening**
A screening process in conjunction with NYCC Care and Support Team and North Yorkshire Police has enabled the directorate to streamline the process for police to refer into us and to ensure that vulnerable adults receive the correct support in a timely manner.
- **COVID-19 Care Settings Response**
A cross-council and multi-agency support system to help care settings to protect people from Covid-19 was established quickly and provided the structure for system-wide intervention and assurance.
- **Selby service-wide response to maintaining care services**
Recognising the collective response to the collapse of a domiciliary service with a sudden need to provide an additional 1500+ care hours a week of service to clients across Selby and Tadcaster.

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