

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 2ND DECEMBER**POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEAD MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE, AND HERITAGE, LEISURE AND ARTS**

- 1 Even without a pandemic, Adult Social Care services were under pressure, due to the failure of successive Governments to come up with a long term funding solution, together with increasing demand for social care.
- 2 In response to the pandemic, and in line with Government guidance, Adult Social Care services have been reviewed, and reorganised to enable continued service delivery over the last nine months.
- 3 New ways of working have been established to respond to short term pressures brought about by the emergency period, but also to address the longer term impact; learning from our experiences to date.
- 4 There are very few, if any, areas of the Adults and Communities Department that has been unaffected by the pandemic, but I would like to focus on a few areas which have been impacted greatly and which have in turn impacted on our residents across the county.

Care Homes

- 5 There are 180 registered care homes within Leicestershire. Of these, 121 (66%) have experienced a Covid outbreak since March of this year. Of course, some care homes have experienced more than one outbreak. There are currently 29 care homes with an ongoing outbreak (which is to say at least two people testing positive within the last 28 days). This is much lower than at the height of the first wave, however numbers have been steadily increasing over the last few weeks.
- 6 Alongside dealing with the virus, preventing and containing infection in both residents and staff, and the sad loss of many residents, care homes have also been managing the increased costs of care and the increased numbers of vacancies across the sector.
- 7 Work is continuing to identify designated Covid-19 positive capacity as required across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. These 'Designated Settings' where Covid-19 positive admissions will be accepted, are few in number as most care providers in the County (and across the country are unable and unwilling to undertake this role due to infection risks to existing residents, insurance conditions, inability to attract adequate staffing, and perceived reputational risk.

Community

- 8 Despite a high level of workforce fragility across the county, home care services have proved to be extremely resilient throughout the pandemic. Working with

providers the Council ensured that essential services could continue throughout the pandemic and it is to their credit that providers have increased capacity over the last nine months to meet increasing demand for care at home.

Throughout the first wave, Covid-19 positive people were managed effectively and the impact of the virus on staffing was contained. However, the Department now faces a difficult and potentially high risk scenario of dealing with a rising level of infection, managing winter pressures, maintaining care over the holiday period and dealing with any issues from the EU exit. The next couple of months could be the most challenging period.

- 9 Many community and day services, and short breaks services, were closed or significantly reduced during the earlier months of the pandemic because of social distancing and infection control measures. Recovery plans and individual risk assessments are underway to allow safe access for people to services to ensure people have support and to reduce stress on carers. To date over 60% of people have returned to day services.
- 10 Continued enhanced support for care homes, community and home care providers is in place, providing advice and information, financial and practical support. Fortnightly provider forums are held, and over 55 information bulletins have been issued to keep communication live and up to date, and to ensure the authority is sighted on issues of key concern to providers.

Integrated health and care services

- 11 Hospital discharge continues to be a significant area of focus, and particularly so in the face of the second wave of the pandemic.
- 12 Leicestershire is one of eight areas nationally working with Professor John Bolton of the Institute for Personal Care, Oxford Brooks University, to understand demand and capacity, and identify and develop ideal discharge pathways.
- 13 People who have received post-discharge support in the emergency period (19 March-31 August 2020) remain NHS funded. Reviews are underway to ensure that people have the most appropriate care for their recovery. Those that are not eligible for continued health funding following review will transfer to the local authority or become self-funding by 31 March 2021.
- 14 There are approximately 1,500 Covid-19 reviews to complete. These reviews will be carefully managed, recognising people will have been in receipt of free services for an extended period including those who would normally pay the full cost of their services.

Workforce

- 15 Most County Council office based staff continue to work from home, with limited office-based activity based on individual risk assessments and service priorities. Face to face visits have resumed where essential with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as needed.

- 16 Many staff have and continue to work outside of their normal working environments doing jobs they have not previously done and working flexibly to meet the needs of the service. I am sure Council will join me in thanking staff across the Adults and Communities Department for their ongoing dedication and commitment to the people of Leicestershire.
- 17 In addition to County Council staff, there are 15,000 people employed in the care sector across Leicestershire in care homes, in home care and in other settings. These care workers often paid on minimum wage are on the frontline of our response to the pandemic and deserve our respect and our support.
- 18 The Council has ensured as far as possible that all appropriate PPE can be accessed and is in place and that everyone is aware of and is implementing proper infection control. However, it should be recognised, that care workers are working in difficult times, and in circumstances which none of us foresaw.

Finance

- 19 There has, however, been a significant financial impact on adult social care which could be potentially in the region of £13.5m. The Adults and Communities Department is, as a result, forecasting an overspend against budget in 2020/21. The continued Covid-19 demands look likely to extend beyond this financial year particularly now that infections rates increase, and restrictions are reinstated.
- 20 During the first wave of the pandemic care providers were supported with around £3m for additional costs being incurred and £11m in an advance payment to support business cashflow.
- 21 In September, the Adult Social Care Winter Plan was published which included a second tranche of Infection Control Fund. This fund will support social care providers up until 31 March 2021, by which time £13m will have been paid to providers in Leicestershire. This together with access to free PPE provides the care sector with additional resources for the remainder of this financial year.
- 22 There remains a level of uncertainty in financial forecasting due to changes in national guidance, changes to national funding allocations and changes in the level of demand for services.
- 23 Further data is required to understand the full impact of the NHS funding contribution; however, it is estimated that in Leicestershire £15m may be required in 2021. In addition, loss of income is estimated to be in the region of £8m and PPE costs could be £0.5m.

Richard Blunt CC

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