

Substance misuse recommissioning – OPCC concerns

Introduction

We have been working with the City, County and Rutland councils and the MoJ (local Probation) to recommission substance misuse treatment services for new provision from 1st April 2022. The County Council, with Rutland have recently made the decision at DMT level to proceed without the City Council. The OPCC and wider partners have significant concerns around this initial decision and this paper sets out the OPCC's concerns which we would ask Health Overview and Scrutiny to consider alongside the original paper.

The original paper states that the decision to separate was a mutual one between the three local authorities but the City Council have confirmed to us that that is not the case and that they still consider a Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland approach to be the best way forward.

Implications of taking a split approach

The impacts and risks of a split approach to commissioning substance misuse are many but include:

- A very real risk that we could have separate providers in the City and County/Rutland with huge ramifications for the both service users and Leicestershire Police/other LLR wide organisations both in terms of referrals and also co-location. This negative impact would be felt at operational, tactical and strategic levels
- A reduction in efficiencies of scale without additional funding being put in meaning a reduction in service offer across LLR and a likely removal of a dedicated criminal justice team and a variety of specialist posts which currently add significant value/improve quality assurance and are unlikely to be achievable with a split service
- Significant disruption for service users both in the short term where we are likely to see a negative impact upon outcomes for service users as we move from one LLR service to two separate services and in the long term with reduced service levels, specialisms and moving between services if they move between city and county (which often occurs with this cohort – 161 times in the past year). Issues will include complex TUPE resolutions and likely loss of staff/specialisms and estate issues (the current Eldon Street location is unlikely to be sustainable for a city only service and the county will need to have more significant hub of their own outside of the city centre despite the fact that for many county residents a city centre service is most accessible).
- A likelihood that existing services will require a 3-9 month extension to enable time for adjusted approaches to be taken.

All of these things (bar the extension) are likely to see a reduction in outcomes for service users and particularly the criminal justice co-hort.

Our ask of the County Council

We are asking the County Council to:

1. Reconsider the initial decision made by their Public Health DMT and meet with senior representatives from the commissioning parties to jointly consider whether a joint commissioning approach might still be achievable

2. To consider extensions to existing contracting arrangements to allow time for the above and/or time for partners to properly consider how they wish to proceed.

We appreciate that the above are not in the gift of Overview and Scrutiny but wished to make our case to the County Council at the earliest opportunity and will continue to make this case in the coming weeks.

The OPCC's position

The original paper states that the PCC's position is to be sought in terms of whether we would continue to co-commission with the separate parties. Clearly it is our hope that we can return to a full co-commissioning approach. Failing that, we will need a reasonable amount of time (a number of months) to properly consider with partners, providers, service users and wider stakeholders what the best approach would be for the criminal justice cohort.

Conclusion

The initial decision by the Public Health DMT could have significant negative implications for service users and the criminal justice system and we hope that this decision can be reconsidered.

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