

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) held at 10.00
am on Wednesday, 10 April 2019

Present:

Members: Councillor D Gannon (Chair)
Councillor J Clifford
Councillor J Innes
Councillor D Kershaw
Councillor R Lakha
Councillor R Lancaster
Councillor T Mayer
Councillor C Miks
Councillor D Skinner

Co-Opted Member: David Spurgeon

Other Member: Councillor F Abbott, Cabinet Member for Adult Services

Employees:
V Castree, Place Directorate
P Fahy, People Directorate
J Fowles, People Directorate
G Holmes, Place Directorate
L Knight, Place Directorate

Apology: Councillor R Ali, Deputy Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport

Public Business

45. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

46. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th February, 2019 were signed as a true record, subject to the inclusion of Councillors Lancaster and Skinner being included in the list of apologies for the meeting.

47. NHS Long Term Plan

RESOLVED that consideration of the item be deferred to a future meeting of the Board to allow for the attendance of Rachael Danter, System Transformation Director, Better Health Better Care Better Value.

48. Task and Finish Group on Mental Health Support to University Students

The Board considered a briefing note of Councillor Gannon, Chair of the Task and Finish Group on Mental Health Support to Students which detailed the outcomes and recommendations from the work of the Group.

The briefing note indicated the Task and Finish Group had been established following the Board's consideration of an item of Suicide Prevention last July. The purpose of the Group was to look at the mental health support available to students in the city. Membership of the Group comprised Councillors Gannon, Hetherington and Kershaw with support being provided from Public Health officers. Coventry had two major universities in the city with a combined population of over 58,000 students. In light of this number of students, Members had been concerned about a potential gap in mental health provision.

The briefing note referred to recent press articles concerning student mental health which indicated that there was a growing issue of student mental wellbeing.

Information was provided on the key lines of enquiry. Representatives from the partner agencies including both universities; the two student unions, Coventry and Rugby CCG, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust (CWPT), GP provision at Warwick University and Public Health were invited to participate. The key lines of enquiry identified by the Task and Finish Group which guided discussions with witnesses were set out.

The Task and Finish Group met with a group of five students from Warwick University arranged through the Student Union. A summary of the main issues raised by the group was set out at an appendix to the briefing note. There was no response to the invitation sent to Coventry University.

The current provider of mental health services in the city was CWPT who were commissioned by the CCG. There was no service specifically commissioned for students, who had the same access to services as all Coventry residents. The services provided by the CCG were detailed. The Board noted that there was a Health Centre on Warwick campus with two practices which students were encouraged to register with. Coventry University had a Medical Centre in the city centre at The Hub, as well as access to another surgery in Radford. Both universities also offered wellbeing and mental health support services for their students.

Following consideration of all the evidence, the Group identified the following themes:

- There were no specific mental health services for students from commissioners and providers. Within a generic 18-25 NHS cohort it was difficult to identify students. Students did have specific needs, often being away from home, their support networks and being under stress to perform well on their course.
- Individual universities provided support, but this was not necessarily joined up with mainstream provision
- Pathways were not clear and a seamless service was needed to help people access the right service faster
- The need for better co-ordination of stakeholders - an app to signpost or a one stop shop for example.

- There was no data set specifically for students. There needed to be an agreement by organisations that student presentations to services were collected. Public Health analysis of this data could be offered to support a future needs assessment and develop the evidence base.
- Crisis intervention generally and definitions of crisis by different partners. Also use of crisis when other services were full, put additional pressure on these services.
- Issues of continuity of service between home and Coventry, where treatment had started before coming to university.

The evidence from the students as users of the service supported these key themes. Additional themes from the students were:

- Lack of “student voice” in mental health services
- Pastoral support was inconsistent, patchy and not always appropriate
- Waiting times for all services were too long.

The Board noted that both universities were in the process of developing Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategies, with support from officers in Public Health. It was recommended that the findings and recommendations from the Task and Finish Group should be considered as part of the development of these strategies.

Members raised a number of issues in response to the briefing note and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- Clarification as to how there would be an assurance that the recommendations would be implemented and the requirement for monitoring
- Clarification about the spend per student on mental health at Warwick University and why there wasn't a corresponding figure for the amount spent by Coventry University
- The requirement for university employees to be aware of the warning signs which highlight that a student could be starting to struggle with mental health issues
- The need for better support for students
- The opportunities to share the findings with other universities around the country, putting forward the work as best practice
- The problems facing students when moving between home and university and obtaining repeat prescriptions
- The need for the CCG to be able to break down their 18-25 cohort so identifying who were students

The Board placed on record their appreciation for the work of officers from Public Health and Scrutiny Co-ordination who had supported the Task and Finish Group and whose work had led to the production the excellent report.

RESOLVED that the following recommendations for the organisations indicated be approved:

To all partners:

(1) That a local mechanism for co-ordination is established between NHS mental health services, universities, voluntary organisations and student unions who are providing different levels of support and care for students which would also include sharing and collection of data.

To the CCG and CWPT:

(2) That services commissioned should be better tailored to student's needs. This could include ideas such as identifying a link consultant to lead on the work with the universities, GPs, Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) and other mental health services. Students should be invited contribute to the design and development of the services.

To Coventry University and the University of Warwick:

(3) That university services are commissioned with reference to other mental health services across the City to enable pathways to be identified and transition between services smoother.

(4) That more training is given to academic and pastoral staff at the universities to recognise mental health issues and provide support and signposting to students. This should include a focus on accommodation staff, for example– wardens, life tutors and security staff who are available outside of office hours. This training should also be offered to private accommodation providers.

(5) That admissions policies should enable the identification of existing mental health issues specifically as part of the admissions process to enable the university to provide any learning, pastoral and health support required. Assurances should be provided that this information will not prejudice the application.

(6) That there should be additional focus on international students' mental health and wellbeing. There should be a cultural emersion scheme which should reflect different cultural attitudes to mental health and how to access health services.

(7) That the findings of the task and finish group be reflected in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategies as part of their development, especially with reference to student voice and working alongside students.

To NHS England:

(8) To recognise that there is an issue where students move between CCG areas throughout the year, often mirroring the academic terms and that if they are receiving treatment or attending appointments this can be a specific issue. There should be more opportunities for sharing information between CCG areas more effectively.

For Warwick University GP services:

(9) That those who commission the service should consider the findings in this report when recommissioning in the future. The current setup is

complicated, the building is not fit for purpose, and there are long waiting times to access a service.

49. Work Programme 2018-19 and Outstanding Issues

The Board considered their final work programme for the current municipal year.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

50. Any other items of Public Business - West Midlands Ambulance Service Quality Account

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator reported that a copy of the West Midlands Ambulance Service Quality Account had been e-mailed to members and their comments/questions on the document had been requested.

RESOLVED that members forward any comments/ questions on the West Midlands Ambulance Service Quality Account to Vicky Castree, Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

51. Any other items of Public Business - Councillor Damian Gannon

Members placed on record their thanks to Councillor Damian Gannon who wasn't standing for re-election at the forthcoming City Council elections. They thanked him for his time and work while Chair of the Board over the past three years and wished him well for the future.

(Meeting closed at 10.30 am)