



# Walsall Council

## Adult Social Care

**Keith Skerman**  
*Executive Director*

Your Ref:  
Our Ref: KS/HN  
Date: 10 October 2016  
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Mr P Fahy  
Director of Adult Services  
Coventry City Council  
Civic Centre 1  
Little Park Street  
Coventry  
CV1 5RS

Dear Pete

Thanks for inviting myself and Pete Jackson back to Coventry to follow up the Peer Challenge that I led in February 2015 as part of the West Midlands sector led improvement programme. Clearly there has been considerable action that has taken place over the last 8 months and the energy, professionalism and commitment of the management team to move adult social care services forward in Coventry was clear to see during the visit.

Inevitably in the time available we were only able to get a very general feel for the current position and spoke to a limited number of stakeholders. From the information provided and the interviews, there were a number of themes that emerged: that your improvement journey has made good progress; that the senior management team has already had an impact in providing a more collegiate approach; a commitment to addressing the long term demands that the health and care system faces in the city and providing a structured approach to systematically addressing the immediate demands on the service.

There were a number of areas that stood out reflecting improvements that had been made since February 2016:

- The production of a vision for ASC in the city which starts to align the values, culture and principles with Children's Services and the council's overall approach to service transformation. The vision is scheduled to be communicated and confirmed with Scrutiny Members, and the wider workforce.

- The two new appointments to the ASC senior management team with a refreshed focus on getting the right processes in place to manage the improvements being aspired to
- The emphasis on Making Safeguarding Personal through new initiatives providing a reinvigorated approach to best practice adopted by frontline practitioners.
- The energy demonstrated to influence the health economy in the City and manage the longer term demands on the care system through STP, specifically in relation to shifting health resources to invest in prevention
- The adoption of more systematic management processes to maintain focus on the financial imperatives that the service has been set. The positive management of the impact of the national living wage was of particular note

The production of the improvement action plan that the team have all contributed to and which has been shared with your scrutiny panel is to be commended as it introduces a degree of rigor and accountability which wasn't seen following the Peer Challenge undertaken in 2013.

We heard about a lot of activity that is underway and a number of initiatives and plans that all indicate a desire to improve services and performance at pace. These are still at early stages of implementation but which emphasise the 'can do' culture of the leadership team.

In advance of the visit I was asked to follow up on three specific areas that are central to your ability to improve the overall service delivery and financial challenges that you face.

We were able to hear firsthand about how managers, front line staff and carers/advocates/service users see their respective roles in attempting to co-produce some of the big changes required. These 3 areas are important to finding innovative approaches to service improvement in Coventry:

- a) ensuring that users and carers were actively included in ASC improvement plans – the newly formed stakeholders' forum told us of their hopes for positive engagement with self-help ideas;
- b) matching implementation of personalised outcomes with supportive financial and recording processes – we heard from staff how the new approach to streamlining forms, making decisions and developing reflective practice through supervision and audit were helpful in this respect;
- c) having a clear sense of the direction and priorities for ASC – the new vision will support this once the rollout and communication by the senior team is completed and linked to financial and business plans.

We are agnostic as to how the fundamental challenges are met, that the health and care system is facing. Much of any council's success in addressing these challenges is in the resilience and energy that the leadership team are able to sustain and your ability to communicate a direction of travel that allows your staff, service users and carers to contribute to meeting and articulating the needs that a healthy community wants to support.

We would identify 5 areas that we feel would help you:

- Working with your elected members to assist you in managing community expectations and promoting alternatives to long term placements and seeing personalisation as a means to managing demand and promoting asset based approaches with the community
- Building on the cultural change you have started in relation to the customer access points and building corporate awareness of the needs of the older people and those with learning disabilities
- Ensuring service users are able to engage with ICT staff to co-produce technological innovations
- Provide better focus on presenting the evidence base for investment in preventative solutions
- Building a narrative for social care in the city that celebrates the successes of the service and simplifies the complex demands the service is placed under to reach a wider corporate and community audience

We would recommend that your cabinet member takes a paper to your cabinet to update your members of the progress that has been made since the peer challenge and to focus more broadly on the raising their awareness of the good work that your staff are doing alongside service users to promote Coventry as a safe city that promotes the independence of its citizens to live long and healthy lives.

If there any areas where you would like further clarification or to talk over any of the points in the letter please do not hesitate to contact me and I am sure you will remain in contact with Pete as part of the regional improvement programme that I know you are committed to.

Yours sincerely



Keith Skerman  
**Executive Director**

**(Please note that Keith Skerman left Walsall Council on 6 May 2016)**