

Lancashire County Council

Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 30th October, 2024 at 10.30 am in
Committee Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston**

Present:

County Councillor David Westley (Chair)

County Councillors

J Mein S C Morris
N Hennessy S Rigby

Co-opted members

Councillor Heather Anderson, Hyndburn Borough
Council
Councillor Chris Church, Pendle Borough Council
Councillor Margaret France, Chorley Council
Councillor Mark Hindle, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Councillor Lou Jackson, South Ribble Borough Council
Councillor Liz McInnes, Rossendale Borough Council
Councillor Viv Willder, Fylde Borough Council

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillors Eddie Pope, Erica Lewis, Peter Britcliffe, Usman Arif, and Borough Councillors Kerry Lloyd, Zafar Coupland and Julie Robinson.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 18 September 2024

Under the Speech and Language Assessment in Early Years item, it was highlighted that the committee also requested information on the evaluation for Rossendale.

Resolved: That noting the amendment highlighted, the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2024 be confirmed as an accurate record.

4. Adult Social Care Waiting Lists

County Councillor Sue Whittam, Lead Member for Health, Balwinder Kaur, Director of Adults Community Social Care, Mark Howe, Director of Quality Improvement and Principal Social Worker and Laura Yates, Head of Service for Community Older People Physical Disability attended the meeting to provide information and partake in a discussion on Adult Social Care Waiting Lists.

The report circulated in the agenda pack provided an overview on the number of people in Adult Social Care waiting for an assessment or review, the report also provided information on the nine areas with the longest wait times, operational challenges, and remedial actions. It was noted that out of these nine areas there were several performing well including safeguarding, carers assessments, financial assessments, and mental health.

A presentation was provided to members (as attached) which sought to highlight key areas including service areas performing well, areas that require improvement, and further detail on mitigations in place.

The Chair invited questions from committee members and a summary is outlined below:

- It was highlighted to the committee that Court of Protection Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (COPDOLs) were usually applicable for an individual living in the community and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLs) were for individuals in residential care.
- Members queried if sickness, industrial action, and annual leave cover were still challenges within Adult Social Care. It was further queried how these challenges were being addressed. It was highlighted to the committee that reducing waiting times was a key priority for Adult Social Care. It was further highlighted that there were 17 days of strike action last quarter which impacted key staffing. Regarding annual leave, it was noted that industrial action coincided with the summer period where employees took more leave and the combination impacted on progress to reduce waiting lists. There was a focus on contingency in teams for annual leave however, it was reported that staffing shortages made this challenging. Members were informed that there was a national focus on workforce in local authorities and the Lancashire County Council Staff Survey would provide further insight on how to support front line staff. Further to this, it was explained that anxiety and stress were a top challenge for employees and the focus was on supporting employees and referring them to support services both internally and externally.
- Regarding the waiting times in Adult Social Care, it was queried why it has taken so long to implement solutions. It was noted that the challenge with



assessment reviews had been ongoing and an agency had always been engaged to conduct reviews. The committee were informed that practice and IT changes had been made to aid the services response.

- The committee queried how the terms and conditions of private employers differed to Lancashire County Council. It was highlighted that the county council terms and conditions compared favourably with other local authorities. However, there remained a preference for some people to work with an agency as it provided a level of flexibility unavailable to full time contracted staff. Furthermore, it was explained that Lancashire County Council had struggled to recruit and retain permanent full time employees and this was replicated across the country.
- Members raised concern regarding the 2,023 cases currently awaiting a Deprivation of Liberty safeguarding review. The committee queried if these Service Users were in a safe environment despite the waiting time. It was confirmed that those awaiting review were already in care and safeguarding in place as a result. In addition, it was highlighted that the care provider would inform Lancashire County Council of any change in their needs to maintain safeguarding.
- Members requested information on the areas performing well and what was put in place for them to succeed. It was noted that safeguarding and mental health were integrated teams with support from police and health. Staff retention was also seen to be better, which contributed to the numbers of experienced staff. It was further noted that they had good local practice models, and these services required a same day response. Regarding mental health services, it was highlighted that they had support from the ICB, as well as VCFS organisations.
- Regarding areas requiring improvement, it was queried what actions were needed to achieve the 25% reduction in waiting lists. It was explained that three tiers of leadership reviewed the longest waits, and weekly meetings took place as well with Heads of Services. Further to this, staff engagement sessions took place on a quarterly basis to help support front line staff.
- The committee queried what comments arose from engagement sessions from staff on areas requiring improvement and areas that were working well. In regard to areas that were working well, it was highlighted that staff expressed they felt supported by managers and senior social workers however it was noted from staff's feedback that capacity constraints in teams were challenging. It was also noted that the new Wellbeing and Early Support model had received positive feedback, and an early 3 month review would be taking place to further understand learning and impact.
- It was explained to the committee that the 'Waiting Well' approach focused on initial contact with all individuals awaiting allocation with the intention to provide further information and signposting to other support if required.



- In regard to Learning Disabilities and Autism initial assessments, the committee queried when the Health and Social Work Agency (Acacium) would be utilised for assessments. It was noted that 54 people were awaiting an initial assessment, however Acacium were contracted to help with reviews and specifically work on cases with longest wait (over a year) therefore they would not work on initial assessments.
- The committee queried why overtime was not already offered to Lancashire County Council employees and a timescale on its implementation. It was confirmed that overtime was used across Adult Social Care at a basic rate. However, members were informed that Adult Social Care were in discussions with People Services with regards to overtime usage and payments, as opposed to the ongoing reliance on agency staff. There was also a need to consider staff wellbeing in utilising overtime as a means to support reduction in waiting lists.
- Regarding the end of the Acacium agency contract in December 2024, it was queried if this was enough time for them to complete the outstanding reviews. Members were informed that the agency were contracted to complete 3,000 reviews and so far, 2,000 had been completed. It was highlighted that agency social workers would still work in the community past December.
- The committee raised concern regarding the end of the Acacium agency contracted and queried how this would affect reassessments next year without their support. It was highlighted to the committee that practice models and processes needed to be reviewed in the long term for efficiency and ideally, the same social worker would review the same case each year however it was noted that individual employees' circumstances were subject to change.
- Regarding the goal of 25% reduction in waiting list numbers, members were assured the progress would be made in the next 12 months and would be complimented by collaborative working with Public Health, and ongoing investment in prevention. It was confirmed to members that updated figures for waiting lists could be brought to the committee before the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection.
- With regard to staffing, it was confirmed to the committee that there was an ongoing recruitment plan, and workforce strategy as well as an active recruitment campaign. Members were also informed that work was being undertaken with universities, and Lancashire County Council were offering a Social Work apprenticeship for the first time.

Resolved: A progress report on work undertaken to reduce assessment waiting list numbers across the nine assessment categories, to include comparator data against current information reported to the committee, be provided to the committee ahead of the upcoming CQC inspection.



5. Report of the Health Scrutiny Steering Group

County Councillor David Westley presented a report on the Health Scrutiny Steering Group meeting which took place on the 8 October 2024.

The report circulated in the agenda pack provided information on NHS Winter Planning and Adult Social Care Winter Planning 2024-25, it was noted that no extra funding was available for winter planning in Adult Social Care.

The report also provided information on the protocol for the establishment of joint scrutiny arrangements in Cheshire and Merseyside, it was highlighted to members that a further report on Shaping Care Together programme would be provided in the December 2024 meeting of the full committee.

Resolved: That the report of the Health Scrutiny Steering Group be received.

6. Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee and Steering Group Work Programme 2024/25, Actions and Assurances Update

County Councillor David Westley presented a report on the Health and Adult Services Committee and Steering Group work programme 2024/25. Information was also provided on actions from the last meeting of the committee and an update on assurances.

Resolved: That the:

- i. Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee and Steering Group Work Programme 2024/25 be noted.
- ii. Cabinet Member responses to recommendations on the Living Better Lives in Lancashire report be supported.

7. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee will be held on Friday 13 December at 10:30am in Committee Room C – The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston.

H MacAndrew
Director of Law and Governance

County Hall
Preston



