

Date:	12 July 2022
Portfolio:	Adult Social Care, Public Health and Voluntary Sector
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Priorities of the Administration

1. Addressing the impact of Covid-19

Manifesto Commitments

- Reform the delivery of public health initiatives in Westminster to make them less top-down and more community and resident led so that they have a genuine chance of working.
- Provide support to community food banks and work with volunteers and food bank users to support those facing food poverty. Ensure Westminster's food banks find permanent homes and sustainable futures.
- Explore the option of setting up community fridges. Develop a food poverty strategy and provide additional assistance to community-led support services.

Actions

Under, the previous administration, informed by a local Health Impact Assessment, the Director of Public Health's Annual Report made the commitment to invest £3.75m in initiatives to address the impact of Covid-19.

Since the election, I have examined the details of each of the projects to identify which should go ahead. Overwhelmingly, the majority are excellent projects including initiatives such as:

- Extra nurse for the homelessness team
- Employment support for people with learning disabilities
- Mental Health Support for teachers
- Investment to a training programme for Early Years practitioners
- Support for the Westminster Wheels programme that supports young people to learn how to repair bikes

However, the list of projects also includes some projects that we need to re-examine, because they can be funded by alternative funding pots or because they are no longer a priority or they are not practical.

We are having conversations with the Communities team about using the money that has been released for a funding programme to support foodbanks, food pantries and the provision of advice and support to mitigate the cost-of-living crisis.

2. In-year Budget Pressures

Manifesto Commitments

- Protect the current number of home care visits for all service users who want to keep them. No one will be forced to replace home care with a check-in phone call from family members.
- Review the provision of meals to older people in the wake of both the pandemic and the closure of the Council's Meals on Wheels service in 2019 to make sure vulnerable residents are not being left to struggle.
- Increase investment in home adaptations and improved technology that will reduce care costs and improve quality of life.

Actions

ASCH had a challenging year last year on the back of Covid-19, in part, due to an increase in demand for services but also due to an increase in complexities in people's needs. Spend has increased on residential and nursing home placements, and care packages due to the Discharge to Assess (D2A) guidance.

For D2A, WCC was successful in claiming £1.9m from our Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) which offset ASC pressures on placements and packages. Furthermore, central Government supported the care sector with one-off grants such as Infection Control and Workforce Capacity, Retention and Recruitment. This helped the sector absorb their growing pressures and the burden on the local authority was dampened.

However, these one-off grants are not expected to continue in 2022-23 which will pose a challenge to manage the net controllable budget of £50m. The directorate has secured further funding from the CCG and continues to lobby for further funds to offset increased financial pressures.

ASCH have had to make £1.8 million worth of savings in 2022-23. This has involved staff changes, such as the re-organisation of the commissioning team, savings from bringing in residents who were cared for outside the borough into Westminster. Additional savings have been in care packages where for example some users have had two carers at a time and can now have care from one carer using a hoist. I have asked the team to provide service user feedback to check if these changes are viewed positively by service users.

Achievements

Digital social care accounts have been launched, with the market onboarded. Now working to incrementally grow service user usage.

Feedback from digital key safe pilot has been very positive and a wider roll out will now begin.

3. JSNA on Health Inequalities

Manifesto Commitments

- Initiate a wide-ranging review of health inequalities (a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) facing Westminster BAME communities. This will look at access to decent housing (particularly addressing overcrowding and homelessness), employment, health inequalities and the relationship between these communities and public institutions such as the Council and Police.
- Further develop Council programmes to reduce obesity, smoking and substance misuse as well as support people with long-term conditions. We know that 'one size doesn't fit all' and that different people and different communities need different services to meet their needs and we will work with the voluntary sector to achieve this.

Actions

The scope of the JSNA on health inequalities is being developed as part of a cross council approach to public health. The JSNA will link with existing and emerging work programmes aimed at addressing health inequalities to ensure it informs operational and strategic action and delivers health improvements. By utilising and linking health and LA data, and working with local communities, understanding of local health inequalities has grown.

This knowledge is underpinning current work programmes to improve the uptake of vaccinations and screening, as well as how we address the wider determinants of health and complex public health issues such as obesity. For example, an NHS England funded pilot will be launched this year to test if offering childhood immunisations in trusted community venues has a positive impact on uptake. The pilot has been informed by a deep dive of the data by GP practice and engagement from all stakeholders.

4. Integrated Care System Update

Integrated Care Systems went live on 1 July 2022. The North West London (NWL) Integrated Care Board (ICB) which is the decision making, budget holding, statutory NHS body, now has a published constitution. The membership of the board and representation from Local Authorities is paramount and ensuring decisions are made as close to communities as possible.

Currently, Westminster and other local authorities are concerned that the Integrated Care Board only has a single vote for one local authority representative (when North

West London comprises of an area covering 8 local authorities). There has been correspondence between the local authorities and North West London CCG but there has been no movement on the part of the NHS so far and the first meeting of the ICB went ahead without a nominated local authority partner.

Place Based Partnerships (PBP) will be represented at the ICB but without a vote. Currently, Westminster is expected to be represented by the chair of the PBP who is the CEO of an NHS trust. We would like to ensure that there is some direct representation from Westminster Council on the ICB.

Place Based Partnerships, are part of the Integrated Care System framework and operate at each borough (or Bi-borough for RBKC and WCC) level. These partnerships will ensure local priorities are agreed and underpinned by the health and wellbeing strategy.

5. Mental Health

Manifesto Commitments

- Pressure the local NHS to reverse the decision to close the Gordon Hospital without providing alternative inpatient community mental health beds. This service should be redeveloped or replaced in South Westminster.

Actions

WCC's Community Mental Service is delivered through a Section 75 partnership agreement with Central North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) and aims to improve the quality of care received by people with mental health needs in the local community.

In light of all the recent changes and the impact of Covid-19 in the borough's communities, the need has arisen to develop a Mental Health Strategy for WCC to help understand the gaps within local systems, improve partnership working and outcomes for residents and service users. Furthermore, the strategy will develop a robust improvement plan to monitor all the recommendations.

Partner agencies including users, residents, and carers that have been engaged to date all support the idea of a strategy and look forward to contributing to the process.

Work is underway with WCC's voluntary sector partners to help in arranging and holding stakeholder events with service users and carers. In essence, using their established connections to reach out to the local community to help in understanding the areas where the future mental health service offer can be strengthened – and using their contributions to help develop the strategy.

6. Voluntary sector

Manifesto Commitments

- Restore a permanent, central grants scheme to provide funding to the local voluntary sector and to enable it to flourish.
- Introduce longer-term grants to provide voluntary organisations with funding security.
- Build in regular engagement with our voluntary sector across multiple fora and ensuring that both our Councillors and officers are approachable and available to voluntary sector colleagues.

Actions

Along with officers from public health, integrated commissioning and the communities team, I led a visit to nine charities to show the team the strengths of the voluntary sector and the gaps in provision.

The Communities department have put together a database that shows all funding to the voluntary sector, including funding from the ward budgets, the Westminster charitable trust and other contracts and grants including the most recent North Westminster grants fund.

We will analyse this and develop a strategy for next steps for funding the voluntary sector.

We will also engage with communities to analyse need. We will explore what services are currently available from the voluntary sector and what gaps there are in provision, looking specifically at our most deprived wards.

There is also a review underway of Westminster council's rental policy to ensure that the process supports the voluntary sector, carries as little administrative burden as possible and yet the process fair and equitable support across the wide and varied sector.

7. Learning Disabilities

Manifesto Commitments

- Work with Council Adult Social Care services, NHS partners and the voluntary sector to ensure that vulnerable people receive social care when they need it.

Actions

I have visited day services and accommodation for service users with learning disabilities, including those provided by Pursuing Independent Paths and Certitude. She has engaged with the parent forum Make it Happen and service provider LDN London. While extremely impressed by the quality of existing services, I have concerns about adults with learning disabilities who are not in receipt of such services. There is a need for the council to explore ways in which the direct payment system can work better for service users to provide collective funding for services.