

Children & Adults, Public Health & Voluntary Sector Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	12 September 2022
Portfolio:	Adult Social Care, Public Health and Voluntary Sector
The Report of:	Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis
Report Author and Contact Details:	Maria Burton, Portfolio Advisor mburton@westminster.gov.uk

1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 12 July:

- 12 August 2022 – Direct Award of Travel Care contracts for Children and Adults (joint decision with Councillor Tim Roca, Cabinet Member for Young People, Learning and Leisure)

2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date of the new administration.

2.1. First 100 Days Update

Launch of digital social care accounts for residents

The pilot for digital social care accounts has launched, enabling residents to manage Direct Payments and purchase their care services online. Residents testing the system can use it as both a marketplace for choosing care from contracted providers, and as a platform to make a payment for any other service. For example, this might be for a Personal Assistant, or for a group of residents to club together and purchase a service collectively. The pilot will be expanded incrementally as more is learned about residents' experiences and preferences using the platform, with an aim to accumulate 50 users before forming recommendations for future use.

Public Health Grant spending

The programme of investing the Public Health reserves in initiatives which address the impact of COVID-19 and the health inequalities it exposed has been reviewed in line with the Manifesto. £1.2m has been released from the Public Health Grant and reallocated to the Capital programme to support important environmental changes in our most deprived areas. The purpose is to make healthy choices the easiest choice, and activity is still being prioritised. These projects will increase the opportunities for residents to be physically active, enjoy green spaces and cycle more, whilst also prioritising neighbourhood projects which bring about better public health outcomes.

Food poverty

The Cost of Living Strategy, launched on Wednesday 20th July 2022, highlights at least £5.5m being targeted towards households in most need of support. This includes funding from Government and projects funded from the Public Health Grant including:

- Extending the Green Doctors service to continue supporting residents with energy advice over the summer.
- Increasing food bank and food pantry access with £140k of funding. Data from North Paddington Foodbank shows that, while their core customer profile is similar, their user volume rose by 157% between December and May, with 225 of the 730 households using the Foodbank having never used one before. Additional funding will be used to increase the capacity of North Paddington Foodbank to respond to need as well as start-up costs for the establishment of a number of new community pantries.
- Westminster Employment Service are being funded to increase financial capability support and train frontline staff to provide additional support and signposting.

2.2. In-year Budget Pressures

The forecast outturn for quarter 1 is a breakeven position. This position is underpinned by an assumption that funding from Discharge to Assess (D2A) will continue to the end of July 2022 and a new funding arrangement to be negotiated on a recurring basis for the remaining months. The directorate continues to lobby and collaborate on the optimal model for further funds to offset increased financial pressures with our health partner Northwest London Integrated Care System (ICS). Last year, one-off funding from D2A and covid grants helped the directorate to remain within budget and report a less than 1% underspend.

Budgetary challenges remain this financial year, in part, due to an increase in demand for services but also due to an increase in complexities in people's needs and the ongoing impact of Covid-19. Spend on homecare packages and residential and nursing placements is expected to increase compared to last year.

The inflationary challenge facing the wider economy is anticipated to have an impact on the adult social care provider market. The council has a responsibility under the Care Act to shape and maintain an efficient and effective market of services for meeting care and support needs in the local area. The directorate will continuously look at ways to mitigate the impact and lower the cost burden for the council but, the current situation is likely to make this challenging.

The directorate is committed to managing agreed efficiencies of £2.745m for 2022-23 and is expected to achieve them in full. A significant proportion of the efficiencies will be delivered through an approach called "Promoting Independence". This approach includes helping service users return to the Borough from more expensive care elsewhere, better use of community equipment to make sure that reablement is successful, and other measures to achieve positive outcomes and value for money.

The Adult Social Care (ASC) Charging Reforms, due to be implemented by October 2023, will bring further pressures. Work is underway to begin to quantify those pressures. A key milestone is 14th October 2022 when the output of the Fair Cost of Care exercise will be submitted to the

Department of Health and Social Care. In this year, the council is in receipt of £900k for this work and up to 25% of this funding can be used to offset the cost of completing this exercise.

2.3. JSNA on Health Inequalities

The scope of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) on health inequalities is being developed as part of a cross council approach to public health and will link with existing and emerging work programmes aimed at addressing health inequalities to ensure it informs action and delivers health improvements.

By utilising and linking health and local authority 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 the wider determinants of health and complex public health issues such as obesity are addressed. 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.

2.4. Integrated Care System Update

NHS Integrated Care Systems went live on 1st 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. Membership of the board and representation from local authorities is paramount, ensuring decisions are made as close to communities as possible. There remains a concerted effort by local authorities to lobby for greater representation on the board and working groups.

There will be representation from each Place/Borough at the ICB and Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), the roles and nominations are currently being discussed and confirmed over the coming month. As a minimum the Bi-borough will require a local authority representative at both. The inaugural ICP meeting is scheduled for 27th September 2022.

NWL ICB has recently launched its Health Inequalities Engagement Framework and has begun using this as a way to inform and develop the NWL Strategy.

The Bi-borough Place Based arrangements are in mobilisation phase with the Health and Wellbeing Board as the accountable board for our health and wellbeing strategy and outcomes for our residents. An integrated governance and delivery structure will report to the Health and Wellbeing Board, aimed to be fully operational by the end of September 2022. A Health and Wellbeing Strategy is in development for borough residents to be launched later this year.

2.5. Mental Health

In July 2022, a stakeholder event was held with statutory and non-statutory partners and chaired by the Lead Member. The purpose of this event was to benefit from 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 forthcoming mental health strategy.

2.6. Learning Disabilities

As of July 2022, and following a meeting with the Lead Member, the Direct Payment system in Westminster has been expanded to ensure service users and their carers are able to take advantage of being able to pool their personal budgets to better support purchasing services. It offers increased access for the following, as examples:

- Attending leisure activities, such as sports club or gym as a
- Group access to a club around a particular hobby
- Setting up a shared opportunity, such as gardening, or managing an allotment
- Personal Assistant (PA) support for personal care, and general support to remain independent and safe
- Hiring a PA or other staff member to help make the above options a reality

The service continues to work with local authority Commissioners, all providers and ASC social work staff to encourage uptake of this option.

2.7. Hot Weather Preparedness

The Council's response to heatwaves falls under the Business Continuity processes for the welfare of staff, and under the Bi-borough Humanitarian Assistance Board for the welfare of service users and the general public.

In response to the last two heat health alerts, the following actions were taken by ASC and Public Health in collaboration with colleagues in Children's social care and Housing:

- Information sent out to residents via council channels advising them how to prepare for and manage during the heatwave
- Information cascaded to adults and children's social care providers, schools and early years settings and registered providers of social housing. This contained advice on carrying out heatwave welfare checks on vulnerable people. There were no escalations to health services or social care commissioning teams during the two heatwaves
- During the first heatwave (level 4 alert), staff in ASC, Housing, the Community Alarm Service and the Children with Disabilities Service carried out heatwave welfare calls to the most vulnerable people known to those services who were not receiving any care visits. No serious concerns were identified, but the vast majority of people called were very appreciative of the contact
- Colleagues in Growth, Planning and Housing responsible for Rough Sleeping Services activated their Severe Weather Emergency Plan (SWEP). The Hot weather SWEP includes extended opening hours for day centres, some with facilities for cooling showers, enhanced outreach activity with provisions such as water, sun cream, etc, collaboration with other street-based services to identify and escalate serious health issues. There was also a veterinary presence on the Strand for pets on the street.

In response to the particular challenges of Westminster's asylum-seeking population living in contingency hotels, Public Health created guidance and a checklist for this kind of accommodation. This will be used to improve longer-term planning for heatwaves. Its content is

also applicable to other kinds of supported living and is being shared by Housing colleagues as appropriate.

2.8. Polio Vaccination Rollout

All children aged 1 to 9 years old in London are being offered an additional dose of polio vaccine, as announced on Thursday 10th August 2022. Families will be contacted by the NHS to ask to book an appointment if their child is eligible for an extra dose.

This follows identification of the polio virus in sewage samples collected from the London Beckton Sewage Treatment Works between February and June this year. Further sewage sampling identified at least one positive sample of the poliovirus in Barnet, Brent, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest.

The additional dose of vaccine to children aged 1 to 9 will either be an extra, booster dose or just to bring them up to date with their routine vaccinations. The vaccination programme will start with the eight boroughs and be followed by rollout across all boroughs.

NWL NHS have been carrying out work around capacity and delivery planning and are in contact with local authorities on messaging. Once the plans for the rollout are finalised, Public Health will work with Communications, Community Engagement and Children's Services to promote awareness and uptake of the vaccination by our families.

Sewage sampling has been stepped-up across London with plans to sample several other sites across England. No patients have been diagnosed with polio to date, as the virus has just been detected in sewage. The risks to the general population are still assessed as low due to high vaccine coverage rates overall.

2.9. Monkeypox

Monkeypox is a rare infectious disease, usually associated with travel to west and central Africa. Since May 2022 there has been an unusual number of cases increasing within the UK. However, the overall risk to the UK population remains low and there have been no deaths in the UK to date.

Anyone can get monkeypox, but currently most cases are in men who are gay, bisexual or who have sex with men. The infection is usually mild and self-limiting, but a person remains infectious to others until their lesions are fully healed. Most people will not require treatment.

Vaccination against smallpox can be used for both pre- and post-exposure prevention and it is up to 85% effective in preventing monkeypox. Preventing infection also requires measures to ensure individuals do not come into contact with infected people and includes self-isolation and appropriate hygiene and infection control measures.

Westminster has a significant night-time economy for gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men, as well residents who come into the groups most at risk of being exposed to the virus.

Actions taken so far

Local sexual health services have provided venues with guidance to minimise spread, including information and guidance being shared with all high-risk venues in Soho ahead of Pride. A local pathway has been put in place for people to self-isolate if they are unable to do so safely where they normally live and cannot make alternative arrangements e.g., our rough sleeping population.

Westminster's services which are highly respected across London, continue to be under severe pressure with the demands of the monkeypox outbreak and the stress it is putting on their ability to maintain their normal sexual health service offer. Strategies to support services that have been put in place include a short-term increase in resource to help with:

- Vaccination capacity
- Increasing primary care provided family planning services to reduce pressure on sexual health clinics; and
- Offering to support services, alongside other London boroughs, with the loss of income from not providing the same level of general sexual health services due to the focus on monkeypox.

Nationally, there is a supply shortage of the smallpox MVA vaccine as international production catches up with new demand. The London region is working to agree a re-prioritisation of the use of the remaining stock whilst awaiting re-supply. Re-supply is not expected until late September/early October. In the meantime, Westminster's sexual health services will continue to vaccinate those at the highest risk with remaining stock and work with partners to ensure that those who are not already in touch with services know where and how to access vaccination when the new supply arrives.

3. Voluntary Sector

3.1 Food and Fuel Poverty Network

The network has met with foodbanks, community pantries, and advice services monthly to hear directly about changes in demand, share approaches, identify gaps and support referrals. The data from the network has been used to shape the Cost of Living Strategy.

3.2 Community Investment Review and Strategy

A review of voluntary sector funding has been conducted across the Council, collating all contracts and grants to the voluntary sector, £33 million in contracts and £3 million in grants. Engagement has been undertaken with the sector on what is working and what needs improving, and a strategy is under development which will look at simplifying funding streams for grants. Work is underway on clarifying the VCS rent policy, maintenance work, and asset transfer policy; standardising contract and grant procedures to include core funding and a consistent council approach; identifying ways to bring in more funding for the VCS.

3.3 Westminster Connects

Working more closely with the Volunteer team at One Westminster, regular volunteer opportunities are sent out once a fortnight to recruit volunteers for all the voluntary sector. The volunteer opportunities run by the council to support vulnerable residents, including shopping, walking companions and dog walking and fostering have increased with a gardening service. A

home care volunteer service is being developed with Adult Social Care to help vulnerable residents with 'life admin' and to make a light meal for them. Westminster Connects will be reviewing what it can do to provide more support with the Cost of Living Crisis. A new platform is under development to make it easier for volunteers and community organisations to advertise opportunities, and a review of Westminster Connects will run over the autumn.

3.4 Community Contribution Fund

Funding of £400,000 was awarded in May to 26 community projects supporting young people, reducing isolation or providing support around homelessness. A living impact report is being developed of short films of people who have benefited from the projects, as well as of the community organisations who run them. Over the next 6 months we will have a project manager from the Civil Service fast stream working on ways to increase the income to the Community Contribution Fund.

3.5 VCS Contracts

New contracts began in July with Healthwatch, run by the Advocacy Project, and with One Westminster for Infrastructure Support and Volunteer Development. Additional funding was awarded to have 4 more case workers at CAB due to the increase in demand because of the Cost of Living crisis. A review has begun on Westminster advice services to inform what is needed in terms of advice services for the next 5 years. The new services will be co-designed with advice services.