

# HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY BOARD - 14 March 2022

## MINUTES

Present: Councillors: K Blunt (Vice-Chairman), M Brain, S Caudwell, D Holl-Allen MBE, D Howell, R Long, A Mackenzie, M McCarthy (Chairman) and R Sexton.

**Cabinet Members:** Councillor Karen Grinsell - Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Partnerships and Wellbeing  
Councillor Tony Diccico – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Officers: Rob Davies – Public Health Consultant  
Jo Luxmore-Brown – Public Health Specialist for Adults and Mental Health  
Ruth Tennant – Director for Public Health  
Jenny Wood – Director for Adult Care & Support  
Joseph Bright – Democratic Services Officer

### 1. APOLOGIES

Councillor D Pinwell submitted his apologies. (Councillor D Holl-Allen MBE – substitute).

### 2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest

### 3. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

Local resident, Mr M Tolman raised a series of questions regarding the establishment of the Nightingale Hub, the programme to create additional contingency capacity, introduced at the end of December 2021.

The Chairman explained how local health partners had been contacted regarding the issues raised as part of Mr Tolman's questions and a written response would be provided in due course. In noting the points raised, it was emphasised that, from a Public Health perspective, the Hub was established at a time of considerable uncertainty around the Omicron virus – at that point, it was clear the variant was highly contagious, however evidence was still being collated and reviewed in regards to its severity.

### 4. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 were presented.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 were approved as a correct record.

### 5. SUICIDE PREVENTION UPDATE

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The Public Health Consultant and the Public Health Specialist for Adults and Mental Health presented the report, which provided the Board an update on the Suicide Prevention Strategy 2017-21 and intentions for 2022-23.

Members raised the following observations and queries:

- Members highlighted how national data demonstrated men aged 45-49 continued to have the highest suicide rate. They detailed how there could still be a stigma around discussing mental health, especially amongst men. Members queried the work being undertaken to encourage people in higher risk groups to access help and support.
- The Public Health Specialist for Adults and Mental Health detailed how they constantly reviewed the evidence base and good practise that was being delivered nationally, including campaigns that were targeting higher risk groups, such as middle age men. She highlighted the Orange Button Community Scheme, a way of identifying people that had undertaken extensive suicide prevention training. Locally, there was a focus upon all front line provision and encouraging conversations about mental health. There were also links with the Council's Community Development Officers and the work undertaken to encourage social connectedness, including bespoke groups specifically attended by men.
- Members queried whether it was possible to provide further data specifically for Solihull, to help understand any trends and inform learning.
- The Public Health Specialist for Adults and Mental Health detailed how they had established good links with the Coroner – Public Health had been granted permission to undertake an audit of suicide data with the Coroner's office. She explained the work being undertaken with partners to establish a real-time surveillance system to track the number of probable suicide deaths in Solihull and Birmingham. It was noted that, partly due to legal process, there was a time lag between an unexpected death being reported and it receiving a coroner's conclusion at an inquest. Real-time surveillance systems would allow more up-to-date information about suicide in the local area, which would help inform the on-going development of local targeted support.
- Members welcomed the suicide prevention training outlined in the report – they emphasised how different people may have different training needs, from a local resident in a voluntary role to clinicians who may be working with high risk groups. They queried how these different training needs were taken into account.
- The Public Health Specialist for Adults and Mental Health detailed the work currently being undertaken to understand all the training across the Birmingham and Solihull footprint – this was being referred to as a 'training tree.' This was being reviewed by partners, to help understand the effectiveness of the training, as well as take-up. The intention was to ensure a suite of training resources was accessible across the Borough, which took into account individual need.
- A Member queried, for the suicides recorded in Solihull, how many were residents with or without a care plan. The Public Health Consultant confirmed a written response would be provided, following the meeting.
- Members queried the ongoing support in place for people facing significant financial pressures, especially with the current cost of living crisis. They also questioned the support available for members of the LGBT+ community.
- The Public Health Consultant detailed how the Suicide Prevention Steering Group focused on local and national trends, such as financial pressures, as well as people fleeing war and conflict, to ensure all potential high risk groups

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were considered. He also confirmed there was focus upon ensuring all commissioned services considered the needs of LGBT groups.

- A Member highlighted how national evidence demonstrated that autistic people were at greater risk of suicide and queried how this could be reflected in the Strategy. The Public Health Specialist for Adults and Mental Health confirmed she would liaise with colleagues on this and provide a response.
- Members welcomed how the report outlined that a real-time referral route was in place, which enabled the police, with consent, to refer a person recently bereaved by probable suicide to the support service, where they made contact within 72 hours. They queried whether flexibility was allowed here, for people who may wish to access support, but weren't ready within these timescales.
- The Public Health Specialist for Adults and Mental Health detailed how it was planned to recruit a Suicide Liaison Officer, within the Bereavement Service. This would allow focus on those individuals who had given consent to receive support, but were not ready within the 72 hours timescale.
- Members queried the arrangements in place for cross-boundary suicide prevention services, as well as ongoing support.
- The Public Health Specialist for Adults and Mental Health explained how this was recognised as a crucial part of the real-time surveillance system, whereby they were looking to establish clear pathways with the police, to help ensure people, who may live cross-boundary, were able to link in the relevant services, in a timely manner.
- Members detailed how the most recent data, whilst provisional, indicated there had not been an increase in suicides during the pandemic. Members emphasised how high numbers of people may continue to access mental health support as we come out of the pandemic, alongside greater financial pressures, as well as global upheaval. They requested an update on current levels of demand and the provision in place.
- The Public Health Specialist for Adults and Mental Health detailed the mental health helpline that was available to residents across Birmingham and Solihull – they had been reviewing the volume of contacts, upon a weekly basis. The capacity of the mental health helpline had been increased, following a significant rise in demand. Online resources and support were also available. The Public Health Specialist explained how, from a holistic, whole system viewpoint, they would need to liaise on this with local partners and arrange for an update to be circulated to the Board.
- Members highlighted cases where families had lost teenagers to suicide, after viewing suicide-related material online. They queried the communication and support in place for this, with children, young people, families and schools.
- The Public Health Specialist for Adults and Mental Health detailed how the safeguarding teams within schools monitored the Internet access and traffic – any issues identified were shared with the school and appropriate communications were shared also. Wider relevant agencies would also be informed, as appropriate. In regards to wider Internet access outside of school, Officers detailed the Online Safety Bill, which was currently going through Parliament and focused upon promoting the safety of children and young people online.
- Members highlighted R;pple, an online monitoring tool, which flagged harmful content relating to self-harm and suicide and replaced it with positive messaging and a range of mental health support channels.
- Members queried the training for schools and teaching staff if they had to support a child or young person who been bereaved by suicide.

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- The Public Health Specialist for Adults and Mental Health detailed how schools had access to Educational Psychologists, who offered specialist support. In regards to support for the wider school community, including friends and peers, the Public Health Specialist confirmed she would clarify the arrangements in place and provide an update to the Board.

The Chairman thanked everyone for the points raised during the discussion. He highlighted how the key issues raised included communication and the sharing of data and information between agencies to enable targeted support to individuals. The Chairman also detailed how effective suicide prevention training was crucial and welcomed the provision outlined in the report. He also welcomed the engagement of front-line service providers in this training and support.

### **RESOLVED**

The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board:

- (i) Noted the progress on the Suicide Prevention Strategy 2017-21 since last update in February 2021.
- (ii) Noted and endorsed the intentions developed by the Solihull Suicide Prevention Steering Group for 2022/23.
- (iii) Agreed for a minute extract of this agenda item to be shared with the Suicide Prevention Group.

## **6. CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH: UPDATE ON PRIORITIES FOR 2021/22**

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health presented the report, which set out the progress in regards to the priorities of his Portfolio, following previous reporting to the Board in July 2021. It was explained how the priorities were aligned with the two relevant directorates, which were the Adult Care and Support Directorate and the Public Health Directorate. The Cabinet Member, in turn, took Members through a number of key pieces of work undertaken within both Directorates.

Members raised the following points and observations:

- Members welcomed the ongoing development of the Health Inequalities Strategy. They highlighted the issue of fuel poverty and queried how this was taken into account.
- The Cabinet Member explained how there was a range of work being undertaken across the Council and by partners to support people experiencing fuel poverty. He detailed the initiatives in place to help promote home energy efficiency and affordable heating.
- A Member asked the Cabinet Member what work he was most proud of within his Portfolio. They also asked whether there was anything the Cabinet Member may have done differently, with hindsight.
- The Cabinet Member detailed how he was extremely proud of all the work undertaken, by the Council and wider partners, to support the Covid response and the delivery of the vaccination programme. He also welcomed the work undertaken to support vulnerable residents in local care homes. The Cabinet Member also explained how, as part of his role, he regularly focused upon any potential learning and continuous improvement.

### **RESOLVED**

The Board noted the report and the priorities of the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health.

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### 7. CABINET MEMBER REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

The Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Partnerships and Wellbeing presented the report, which updated Members on the progress of the Health and Wellbeing Board over the municipal year. She outlined the key issues overseen by the Board throughout the year, which included the on-going Covid-19 Impact Management, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Scorecard reporting, the Health Inequalities Strategy, the ongoing development of the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System, as well as the work of Solihull Together.

Members raised the following queries and observations:

- Members welcomed the update contained in the report on the Health Inequalities Strategy and queried whether could be further reference here to adolescents.
- The Deputy Leader explained how she recognised this point and emphasised the volume of work currently being undertaken to support adolescents and young adults, noting the significant impact of the pandemic upon their wellbeing and education. She detailed the Inclusive Growth Strategy, which focused upon ensuring adolescents were able to acquire the necessary skills and experiences to pursue various employment opportunities.
- A Member requested an update on access to Primary Care services, noting concerns raised by local residents.
- The Deputy Leader confirmed the delivery of Primary Care services had been considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board throughout the year. She detailed how the development of the Integrated Care System, as well as the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board, provided significant opportunities for engagement and collaborative working between Primary Care services and wider partners across the health and wellbeing system.
- A Member requested the Deputy Leader to identify which piece of work undertaken by the Health and Wellbeing Board they were most proud of. They also asked the Deputy Leader if there was anything they would have done differently, with the benefit of hindsight.
- The Deputy Leader highlighted the Director of Public Health Annual report, recently considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board. She emphasised this report demonstrated how the Council, wider partners and all the local community had stepped up to the challenge of Covid. In regards to future work, the Deputy Leader detailed how she wished to focus further upon social connectedness and digital engagement.
- Members welcomed the opportunities provided by the development of the ICS. Members noted how Solihull would be part of a wider system and queried how it could be ensured that local priorities continued to be met.
- The Deputy Leader detailed how she represented the Council at the ICS Board. She explained how the development of the ICS was place-driven, with the establishment of place-based partnerships, collaborative arrangements formed by various organisations, focusing upon the delivery of health and wellbeing services and support to a specific locality or community. It was detailed how the ICS allowed a highly localised approach, focused on need.

#### **RESOLVED**

The Scrutiny Board noted the progress of the Health and Wellbeing Board over the municipal year.

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At the end of the meeting, the Chairman expressed his thanks to the Members and Officers for their support of the work of the Board over the municipal year.

The Chairman and Members also requested to put on record their thanks to Joe Suffield, the Democratic Services Officer, who had recently left the organisation. They thanked Joe for all his work in supporting the Board and wished him well in his future endeavours.

End time of meeting: 20:25