



# Report to Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Title:** **Adult Social Care Update**

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**Officer support:**

**Recommendations/Outcomes:** **The Committee is asked to note the report.**

## 1. **Background**

Following its last meeting, the HASC asked for an update on key issues facing adult social care. This report focuses on the adult social care response to Covid, the social care workforce, support to carers, vaccinations in care homes, support to care providers, and the Better Lives Transformation programme.

## 2. **Main content of report**

Adult social care continues to operate at the forefront of the Covid pandemic response, as it has done since the start of the crisis in early 2020. At the same time, statutory services have been maintained as a result of careful planning, joint work with health and social care partners, and a highly flexible and adaptable workforce.

Unfortunately, we were unable to secure additional support from neighbouring authorities although by reallocating our resources we were able meet the demands of the pandemic without resorting to enacting any of the Care Act Easements.

**Covid Response:** Since early January 2021, adult social care has particularly focussed on hospital discharges and on ensuring the safety of our most vulnerable clients:

### Vulnerable clients

- A consortium of providers are delivering a 'keep in touch' service to those users of social care services who need and have requested support
- The consortium includes Connections Support, Bucks Mind & Age UK, and Community Impact Bucks is seeking engagement from other VCS organisations
- Approximately 170 people have signed up for the service and are receiving weekly calls from the providers.
- Six library staff have been reassigned through the Council's mutual aid programme, providing addition capacity to ensure that support is provided to everyone who requests it.

### Hospital discharges

- A joint ASC and NHS hospital discharge cell was set up in early January, initially meeting daily, to monitor, address issues and plan for people to leave hospital appropriately
- A Covid-positive designated setting, Chartridge Ward, has been consistently used to capacity (14 beds)
- An additional 4 Covid-positive beds have been secured at a designated setting in Berkshire
- Seeleys was repurposed for several weeks as a facility to take people with low level care needs whilst their home care arrangements were sorted
- 139 short-term placements (Discharge to Assess) in care homes were commissioned to ensure people could recover and be assessed for care needs out of the hospital setting
- A new operational process was introduced for the hospital RRIC and local authority Reablement teams which meant that patients were more quickly helped to return home
- Capacity was developed so that 70 people could be supported home through Home First and home care Discharge to Assess arrangements
- A reporting process was developed to ensure issues on discharge were logged and lessons quickly learned
- Improvements were made to the information available on patients who were or about to be medically fit within Bucks Hospital Trust (BHT) to enable better system planning
- Issues faced during this period included significant pressures on hospital capacity, and community hospital and care home outbreaks (which reduced discharge pathway capacity)
- Pressure on hospitals, as at 16 February, appears to be easing.
- D2A beds in care homes have high occupancy and each one will require assessment and consequent arrangement of care packages, as necessary, during the 6-week stay.
- Staffing capacity to support the D2A care home pathway is challenging. Therapists and reablement staff are needed to support recovery, and social care staff to make assessments

### **Workforce:**

#### Vacancies

The table below shows the vacancy rate as at 12 February 2021. The data relates to all regulated adult social care posts and excludes social work assistants and agency posts. The data does include social worker posts covered by agency workers (shown as vacancies for the purpose of the vacancy rate calculation).

*Table 1: Social Work Vacancies, 12 Feb 2021*

<b>HR Metric</b>	<b>Posts</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Total social worker posts	118	78 posts covered by BC/BCC employees
Total vacant social worker posts	37	15 posts covered by agency workers 22 vacant posts
Vacancy rate (including posts covered by agency staff)	31%	Calculation: $37/118 \times 100 = \% \text{ rate}$
Vacancy rate (excluding posts covered by agency staff)	19%	Calculation: $22/118 \times 100 = \% \text{ rate}$

In addition, adult social care has a further 18 agency/interim staff, 15 of whom are funded by the CCG/Covid-19 funding.

### Support for Staff

The past year has been a challenge for those working in adult social care. As part of the Council's commitment to supporting health and wellbeing of staff, employees have been encouraged to take advantage of a range of support and advice including:

- Information, advice and support available through the Council's corporate functions including the employee assistance programme, access to counselling, Mental Health First Aiders and learning hub resources
- Use of the MIND Wellness Plan, which has been actively promoted throughout adult social care
- Specialist support for adult social care staff such as Cruse bereavement webinars, team reflective sessions, and webinars for managing anxiety and for managers in supporting the mental health of their teams
- You Matter, a new staff mental health and wellbeing hub, which was launched in early February across the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West footprint

### **3. Carers:**

Adult social care commissions Carers Bucks to deliver support to Buckinghamshire's carers. At the end of Quarter 3, 2020-21, there were 12,786 registered with the service. During Covid, Carers Bucks has:

- Secured infection control grant monies of £150,000 to enable carers to access PPE and pay additional support so carers can attend vaccinations or testing. This has been promoted across Buckinghamshire and approx. 400 people to date have applied for funds
- Continued to provide prompt information, advice, guidance and emotional support to carers through its Adult Carer Service including the core team, hospital team and Caring for Older Carers team, both by responding to calls and by making wellbeing calls to some of the most vulnerable carers. Calls received have related in the main to carers in crisis, seeking practical support or seeking support over the loss of family members who had passed away in hospital.
- Reorganised delivery from April to June 2020, arranging telephone monitoring to check on wellbeing, and prioritising people caring for someone with dementia and young carers no longer able to access support through school
- In July 2020, started delivering monthly virtual support groups for adult carers via Zoom, as well as continuing offering support services to newly referred carers
- Used the carers discretionary budget to fund therapies to help carers with their own health and wellbeing needs

### Young Carers

- Carers Bucks contacted all 1043 young carers several times during the initial lockdown
- Support offered included free meals through the Masons and delivery of activity packs
- Assessments and one-to-ones were held in schools and colleges in a safe environment with Zoom used where that was not possible

- Zoom has also been used for targeted support, and fun sessions such as fitness, Zumba and arts and crafts
- Two activity days were held during the summer for young carers most socially isolated with over 40 attendees at each
- A 'Reaching Out' project was started using additional funding from the Carers Trust to support young carers to overcome anxiety about returning to society
- In the autumn, face-to-face sessions resumed, and young carers were able to take part in Halloween events in Chesham, Wycombe and Aylesbury
- Covid safe walks with support workers were instigated
- Presents and hampers were arranged for all carers over the Christmas period

**4. Vaccination programme:** All care home settings have been contacted regularly to offer residents and staff vaccines. Staff have additionally been repeatedly encouraged to be vaccinated, which they can access through care homes, the national portal, or from hospital hubs.

Data is only available through the Capacity Tracker and therefore is unlikely to be an accurate record. However, as at 16 February, of the 122 care homes listed on the tracker:

- 2403 residents had been vaccinated, with 308 not vaccinated
- 2779 staff had been vaccinated, with 1440 staff not vaccinated

Communications to care homes and social care staff continues to encourage vaccinations.

**5. Care Home Provider market:**

#### Support to Care Providers

The Covid pandemic has created a number of pressures on care providers including increased operational costs and a reduction in self funder clients. During the Covid pandemic the Council has supported providers in a number of ways:

- Ensuring care providers have had prompt access to additional funding made available by the Government:
  - Infection Control Fund – 1<sup>st</sup> Allocation - £6,252,586
  - Infection Control Fund – 2<sup>nd</sup> Allocation - £5,335,317
  - Rapid Testing Grant - £1,524,454
  - Covid claims - £5,895,013
  - Workforce Capacity Grant - £836K
- Supporting provider operations, for example by enabling access to key Government schemes such as access to free PPE and testing, and working with providers who are experiencing staffing difficulties
- Using the National Capacity Tracker and intelligence from other agencies to identify providers facing particular challenges and making proactive contact to offer assistance
- Holding regular forums to meet with the senior leaders from the largest providers, to get feedback on the care environment.

### Financial Viability

A key activity in the commissioning of social care services is identifying, understanding and managing supplier risk and the ongoing monitoring of the financial viability. Providers at risk of financial difficulties are identified through contract monitoring or by making direct contact. The Council seeks to mitigate the financial risks as far as possible by working with providers and providing appropriate support. A provider support tool has been developed to assess approaches from providers who are experiencing financial difficulties.

However, the Council has limited control over financial risks, as many providers have a high number of self-funders and are businesses which are independent of the Council. There are also limits to the level of intervention the Council can provide to a business which finds it is no longer financially viable. In this event, the Council has a duty to safeguard and support the affected clients and ensure continuity of their care. The form this will take is dependent on the specific circumstances.

- 6. Better Lives Strategy:** Despite the pandemic work has continued on key transformation projects where it has been possible to do so:

#### Better Lives Strategy Shift

- *Living Independently* aim: The majority of people will help themselves to stay well and live independent, fulfilled lives
- *Regaining Independence* aim: Services provide short-term support to help people maintain or regain control over their lives
- *Living with Support* aim: Personalised social care support will be created with people and their families

#### Project Updates

- Short term intervention: This project is about transforming health and Council reablement services into a single, therapy led service, integrated with the community OT. Work has been delayed as the system responds to the pandemic. However, as a result of the need to relieve hospital pressures a joint triage system is being piloted and is showing encouraging results. This will be taken into consideration in shaping the future design of the service
- Preparation for adulthood: Development of an holistic service across ASC and Children's Services is being progressed, although implementation has been delayed by Covid
- Mental health services: Work is taking place to review the Section 75 arrangement and to review and implement improvements to social care practice. Timeframes have again slipped due to the pandemic.

#### Transformation Phase 2

- The Directorate is starting work to consider what the next phase of the Transformation programme should include. One area will be on services and support for carers.

### **7. Next steps and review**

The Adults and Health Directorate is still responding to the Covid pandemic and supporting partners in the wider health and social care system in their response. However, statutory

services continue to be delivered and the Directorate remains focussed on doing all it can to ensure our most vulnerable residents are supported to stay safe and well.