



Report to Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee

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Title: Update on Adult and Health Directorate Services

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Officer support:

1. Overview of service and key partnerships

The Adults and Health Directorate within Buckinghamshire Council includes services related to adult social care, integrated commissioning and public health. There is also a service focused on improving quality, standards and practice.

Strategically, the Directorate works closely with NHS partners as part of the Integrated Care Partnership within Buckinghamshire, and the wider Integrated Care System across the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West footprint. The Council will continue to play a significant role in ensuring the voice of Buckinghamshire is heard as new arrangements outlined in the recently published Health and Care Bill are implemented. The Directorate also has strong and positive working relationships with care providers and with VCSE organisations, with a clear focus on improving the health and wellbeing of our residents.

Adult social care ensures care and support is provided to all people, including carers, who meet the eligible criteria under the Care Act 2014. In addition to social workers and assistants, the adult social care workforce includes occupational therapists and assistants and staff working in day opportunities and short breaks. Together they provide professional assessments, advice and support to adults of all ages, working with people to plan how their social care and wellbeing needs could be best met. The service works closely with NHS partners particularly around hospital discharge and supporting those in crisis, and has begun exploring better links with housing services in the Council, a benefit of the unitary organisation.

The Directorate works to the framework of the Council's Better Lives Strategy, which sets out the ambition for transforming services to better meet the needs of residents by

enabling people to live independently for longer in their own homes where possible, as set out in the diagram below.



The Better Lives Strategy focusses on:

- Independence and choice
- A strengths-based approach, which means looking with the person at what they can achieve and building on networks of support that they already have in place
- Safeguarding adults when necessary
- Delaying/reducing the need for traditional care services
- Sustainability of the care market to meet current and future needs
- Working as part of the health and social care system to provide high quality care and support to residents
- Best value for money

As at end of May 2021, the Council was supporting nearly 900 residents living in residential care settings, over 500 people in nursing homes, over 550 people in supported living arrangements and funding over 1,300 homecare packages.

The integrated commissioning service commissions on behalf of adult social care, public health, children's services and the Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group. As well as procuring care packages and placements for people, integrated commissioning contracts services through formal tendering processes from a wide range of providers across the private and VCSE sectors; monitors contract performance and the care market; and engages with service users and others to understand their views and needs. As an example of the volume of work, across all client groups the Council currently has contracts with over 340 adult social care providers.

The quality, standards and performance service is pivotal in supporting the Directorate by driving through a range of quality measures which reflect the Council's commitment to delivering the best quality services within available resources. These are not just Council resources but include the resources available to the individual through their own families, friends, networks and local communities. The Directorate's Quality Assurance Framework provides the overall setting within which adult social care services operate on a day-to-day basis. The quality, standards and performance service works with partners, including the NHS, on a range of areas such as joining up systems and workforce planning across health and social care.

The public health service has a number of mandatory functions in four main areas:

- Health promotion – encouraging and supporting healthy lifestyles and working across the Council and other partners, including housing, town planning, transport, health and the VCSE, to help improve the health of residents
- Health protection – providing leadership, advice and support in relation to communicable disease control, environmental hazards and public health emergencies
- Health Care Public Health – advising NHS commissioners on health and health care based on strategic evidence
- Population health surveillance – data analysis on a wide range of topics

2. Key challenges and impact on services

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the health and social care sector had to rapidly change the way in which services were provided. Although the vast majority of adult social care services have continued throughout the pandemic, there was a short period when the Council's direct care services were closed. However, even then people who used those services were supported safely in other ways including online and on an outreach basis. During 2020-21 a total of 212 compliments were received about adult social care services, compared with 75 concerns (dealt with informally in a timely manner) and 44 formal complaints. As part of our quality improvement initiatives, a 'lessons-learnt' approach is embedded to improve the experience of residents who use the Council's services. The Directorate Board monitors the detail of these on a monthly basis.

As part of the health and social care system, the Directorate has and continues to be part of the frontline response to the Covid-19 pandemic, working closely with a range of care providers and the NHS in the protection and safety of residents. The Directorate responded very quickly at the start of the pandemic and examples of good practice were cited by the Local Government Association. Some examples of activity included:

- The setting up of a 240-bed social care facility by converting Olympic Lodge, with it being ready to take people within three weeks;

- Developing a consortium from the VCSE to deliver ‘keep in touch’ calls to those of our most vulnerable clients who felt particularly isolated. Over 21,500 calls were made over the first year of the pandemic, to make sure people were safe and well and linking them with support if needed;
- Supporting care providers to access PPE locally and through a county-wide emergency distribution centre ahead of the establishment of a national PPE portal. At its peak, the Directorate was supplying nearly 65,500 pieces of PPE per fortnight;
- Working with health partners on rapid hospital discharge, ‘discharge to assess’, and implementing a ‘home first’ approach, to ensure people return home where they possibly can rather than be admitted to a care home for a period of time;
- Public health leadership to Buckinghamshire during the crisis, including timely provision of data analysis and advice; oversight of the track and trace system; outbreak control advice; and advice and support to schools;
- Joint working with the CCG to quickly set up a supply of emergency PPE to the sector;
- Developing an ‘Enhanced Offer’ ([buckinghamshire.gov.uk.s3.amazonaws.com](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/s3.amazonaws.com)) of support to care providers from the Council & partners including Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, the Alzheimer’s Society, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust and local faith leaders. Accredited infection control training was provided to over 90 care providers; and
- Facilitating the distribution of additional government funding, with 140 providers accessing Covid-19 moneys, and over 215 providers receiving funding from the Infection Control Grant.

The work of the public health team has been significantly disrupted over the past year, as the team focused on providing public health leadership to Buckinghamshire during the pandemic. Although a small number of areas such as healthy ageing and the national child measurement programme stopped, most services were either reduced, such as the public health input into maternity services, or moved to new ways of delivery, including substance misuse and sexual health services, and support for healthy lifestyles.

Throughout the past year, the Directorate workforce has demonstrated a flexibility and adaptability that has ensured Buckinghamshire’s most vulnerable residents stay as safe, well and connected as has been possible during the pandemic.

Although the Directorate workforce has responded phenomenally to ensure that those who need the Council’s support have not been left isolated, the year has been incredibly challenging for staff. The Directorate’s leadership has been acutely aware of the commitment of the workforce and the importance of maintaining good health and wellbeing. Regularly reviewing the impact on staff, the Directorate, Council and wider health and care system has invested in additional support to support those delivering services. Within the Directorate, regular all-staff virtual meetings have been held with the senior management team so that people could directly raise questions and concerns; the

employee assistance programme was widely and extensively promoted; and staff had access to a number of online tools such as the Government's CARE app and the local NHS 'You Matter' mental health and wellbeing hub. Managers in the directorate have championed the MIND Wellness Action Plan, encouraging all staff to complete the tool which help individuals and their managers recognise signs of stress and implement mitigations to stop issues from escalating.

Despite the backdrop of the pandemic, the Directorate continued its career opportunities commitment to the workforce. The first social work apprenticeship programme and a range of new virtual learning opportunities were launched. Working in partnership with Bucks New University, the Council created a Health and Social Care Academy to create local learning opportunities. In January, the Directorate welcomed the first intake of six Health and Social Care Cadets as part of a new initiative to create work opportunities for residents aged 16-24. The Cadet scheme was launched in partnership with the Health and Social Care Academy and the Bucks College Group.

The Council also recognises how difficult the Covid-19 pandemic has been for independent care providers. The integrated commissioning service has continued to support care providers, currently with a renewed focus on recovery and resilience. Care providers still have access to a single point of contact for queries and concerns and regular communication continues, with updated guidance, webinars and training, support with the roll out of PPE, vaccinations and infection control processes. Care providers have also benefited from the effective distribution of financial support totalling almost £9m, through:

- Infection control grants to support staff to receive normal wages when isolating, safe visiting and limiting staff movement between settings
- Rapid testing grants to fund staff training to carry out testing, separate testing areas and disposal of testing, and
- Workforce capacity grants to support the loss of staff hours through illness and/or isolation caused by COVID.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the Directorate leadership has recognised the importance of keeping focus on the future. Pre Covid-19, the Directorate was undertaking a significant programme of transformation, to ensure services are able to meet future need and demand in a sustainable and effective way. During the past year, the leadership team has maintained its ambition for service transformation and delivery of its strategic vision, Better Lives. As part of this programme, in late 2020 the adult social care service started the most significant restructure for 15 years, involving over 400 staff. Through a carefully considered programme of engagement with adaptations for home working, this was completed successfully and implemented in June 2021.

In addition, the Directorate also implemented a new social work case management recording system. This was a major IT system change for the service and was launched in

March 2021. The new system provides improved tools to support the social care workforce in undertaking their operational activities.

Alongside all other local authorities, the Council remains concerned about the sustainability of adult social care services. The Government has committed to a long-term solution to the funding of adult social care services, which is vital to ensure that the most vulnerable residents in Buckinghamshire are able to draw on social care services when needed.

3. Long-term and short-term recovery plans

Apart from a short period at the start of the pandemic, all adult social care services have remained open in line with government guidance. Some of the different ways of working during Covid-19 have given services, clients and partners the opportunity to think differently about how needs can be met. In some areas new approaches have been taken and work has already started with partners on exploring the potential of some of these opportunities. For example, the Integrated Care Partnership is looking at how to secure long-term improvements to hospital discharge and admission avoidance, and the Council is exploring how the Enhanced Offer to care providers can be maintained post Covid. The Enhanced Offer is a range of additional support that care providers can access from the NHS, the Council and VCSE partners.

National evidence and a local survey on the effects of Covid-19 have indicated that the pandemic has affected the health and wellbeing of all our residents in multiple ways. Some residents have been particularly affected, including older people, those with pre-existing long-term conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, people from certain ethnic groups and those living in more deprived areas. In addition, many people's mental and physical health has worsened during the pandemic. There has, for example, been a significant increase in the number of people contacting the substance misuse service for support with alcohol related concerns.

In response, the Directorate is working in partnership with communities, the NHS and the voluntary sector to address mental health and social isolation, to help residents to stay healthy by tackling unhealthy behaviours, and to help prevent heart disease and diabetes. The partnership work also includes programmes promoting physical activity, obesity and addressing food poverty. Where possible, projects will be co-designed with communities and key partners.

Work has also taken place with commissioned providers of public health services to respond to demand. These have included: enabling the provider of the substance misuse service to offer additional alcohol support; implementing an enhanced digital service so that people can access online screening for sexually transmitted diseases; and developing action plans to support increased referrals into the integrated lifestyle service. At present, there is a gradual return to pre-Covid public health services, although it is unlikely that services will fully return to business-as-usual until spring 2022 at the earliest.

A significant proportion of the public health team remains focussed on Covid-19, work which includes development of the Health and Wellbeing Recovery Plan for Buckinghamshire. With partners, the Council is seeking to address the health inequalities that have widened as a result of Covid-19 and has established a Buckinghamshire-wide group to develop an action plan to address the impact that Covid-19 has had on minority ethnic communities.

The long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, both on our residents and on the care market, are only likely to become evident over time. For example, the new legislation in relation to the vaccination of care home staff may impact recruitment and retention in the local care market. Both our adult social care and public health services will closely monitor the local situation to identify potential issues as they emerge and implement further mitigations where possible.

4. Quality assurances, including key performance indicators

Adult social care is on an improvement journey and has a range of internal measures in place to monitor and quality assure its work. An improvement plan is in place, supported through a Quality Assurance Framework. The measures to deliver improvements range from internal case file audits which are externally audited on an annual basis, the establishment of an independently led Practice and Quality Board, service user engagement, and learning from complaints.

The Directorate is also preparing for the new CQC inspection regime and is working with colleagues in the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) on a self-assessment tool to help identify gaps and improvements needed.

A range of key performance indicators are published and reported on a quarterly basis through Cabinet. In addition, the Council also submits a number of statutory returns on an annual basis.

The impact of the improvement initiatives are noted in the recently published national user survey for 2020-21 which shows improvements in satisfaction with the Council's adult social care services, despite the pandemic. Satisfaction with the care and support that people receive has improved (68%) and is now higher than both the CIPFA comparators (65%) and the England average (64%). Only 3% of people were dissatisfied with the service they receive.

The number of people reporting that they have control over their daily lives has risen from 75% in 2019-20 to 83% (78% CIPFA, 77% England), and those who say that they feel safe has increased to 77% from 68% (71% CIPFA, 70% England). The results were based on the views of 579 clients, representing a 28% return rate on the survey.

5. Key priorities over the next 12-18 months

Covid-19 recovery and the health and wellbeing of Buckinghamshire residents will be a primary focus for the Directorate in the year ahead, particularly in relation to co-ordinating activity to address health inequalities.

The Council funds just 37% of the residential and nursing care market, which means that providers have a significant reliance on people who fund their own care. Over the next year, the Directorate will continue to work with the care market through Covid-19 recovery and will be analysing changes to establish a picture of future demand and supporting providers to create or maintain services to meet that demand.

In addition to monitoring and responding to any developments in relation to Covid-19, the Directorate will be working on a number of other priority areas during 2021-22. These include supporting the adult social care workforce in embedding the new structure and working with the NHS and other partners on the Integrated Care Partnership priorities.

The Directorate will be starting work on Phase 2 of its Better Lives transformation programme. The programme is to be agreed later in July but will include a focus on support available to carers and to those living with dementia, amongst other key areas.

The quality improvement initiatives will continue with a strong focus on resident engagement, increasing opportunities to use assistive and other technologies to improve health and wellbeing and reduce isolation, enhancing careers opportunities for staff, and expanding local learning opportunities through the Health and Social Care Academy.

Over the next two years, the integrated commissioning service will be introducing a new way of procuring packages of care for people. The approach will allow the Council to set out new terms relating to price and quality. Providers who have met these terms will then be able to bid for packages of care through an online portal. This will make the process of procuring services much more efficient and will help improve quality and deliver value for money.

6. Background documents

[Better Lives Strategy 2018-21](#)