

Scrutiny Health & Social Care Sub-Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday, 8 March 2022 at 6.30 pm

This meeting was held remotely and a recording can be viewed on the Council's website

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Sean Fitzsimons (Chair), Richard Chatterjee (Vice-Chair), Alison Butler and Andrew Pelling

Gordon Kay (Healthwatch Croydon (Co-optee))

Also Present: Councillors Janet Campbell and Bernadette Khan

Apologies: Councillor Steve Hollands and Yusef Osman (CASSUP Co-optee)

PART A

7/22 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

8/22 Disclosure of Interests

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

9/22 Urgent Business (if any)

Although, there were no urgent items of business for consideration by the Health & Social Care Sub-Committee at this meeting, it was agreed that the Healthwatch Croydon Manager, Gordon Kay, would provide feedback on latest report from his organisation at the end of the meeting.

10/22 Service Recovery and Response During Covid-19 Pandemic & Winter Pressures

The Sub-Committee considered a presentation set out on pages 13 to 24 of the agenda and a second presentation included in a supplement to the main agenda, which provided an update on the recovery of services and the ongoing response to the Covid-19 Pandemic and winter pressures. These presentations had been provided to allow the Sub-Committee to understand the current risks to service provision and to seek reassurance that these risks were being managed.

The presentations were delivered to the Sub-Committee by the Croydon Health Services Chief Executive and Place-Based Leader for Health, Matthew Kershaw, the Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Health, Annette

McPartland and the Director of Public Health, Rachel Flowers. These presentation can be viewed on the following links: -

[Covid-19 Response & Winter Pressures](#)

[Public Health – Living Safely with Covid-19](#)

Following the delivery of the presentations, the Sub-Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions on the information provided. The first question highlighted that the early stages of the pandemic saw an increased loss of life in care home settings, but in subsequent waves Croydon had performed well in this area. As such it was questioned what lessons had been learnt. It was advised that limiting the vulnerability of older people to the effects of covid-19 had been identified as a priority by health and care professionals early in the pandemic, which had led to the safeguards introduced becoming an example of good practice. The introduction of the vaccination and the work invested into ensuring the vaccination rate was as high as possible had played a key role in improving resilience to the impact of covid-19. The vaccination work would continue as it was essential to safeguard against the potential impact from any future waves of the virus.

Given the rising cost of living nationally, particularly the cost of food and fuel, was likely to lead to increased poverty, it was questioned whether plans were in place to ensure the resulting rise in demand for services could be managed. It was acknowledged that inflation and poverty were likely to be game changes which would impact on many areas of people's lives. The rising cost of inflation had been built into the Adult Social Care budget, but whether this amount was sufficient would need to be closely monitored. It was likely that people would be coming to social care for the first time and as such it would be important to ensure that good advice and guidance was available at the 'front door'.

In response to a question about how home visits by midwives and health visitors had been impacted by the pandemic, it was advised that these services had been maintained through the introduction of precautions, particularly earlier in the pandemic. This had included virtual visits in some cases to limit risks, but these services were now running at their pre-pandemic levels. The Council's Public Health team had worked closely with colleagues at the Croydon University Hospital throughout the pandemic to ensure health visits could be managed safely.

It was highlighted that Healthwatch Croydon was received a lot of feedback from patients about the difficulty of accessing GPs, with an update on this requested. It was confirmed that surgeries had continued to offer face to face services throughout the pandemic, although virtual appointments were encouraged where possible to minimise the risk of covid-19. The current number of appointments was at a higher level than pre-covid, with a higher proportion of face-to-face appointments compared to virtual appointments. There was also a lot of activity in primary care to support people's wider needs through work such as social prescribing.

The Sub-Committee agreed that areas such as mental health provision and the impact from rising inflation would need to be closely monitored in the forthcoming year. It was also agreed that the Adult Social Care Budget and the impact from delivering the identified savings upon service delivery would also continue to be a priority for Scrutiny going forward.

In closing the discussion on this item, the Chair highlighted the impact of the pandemic on people especially the workforce over the past two years. It had required a lot of hard work and dedication from staff working in health and social care to ensure Croydon responded as well as it did to the challenges presented by the pandemic and the thanks of the Sub-Committee were given to those involved. The Chair also thanked Dr Agnelo Fernandes.

11/22 **An Overview of Mental Health Provision in the Borough**

The Sub-Committee considered a report, set out on pages 25 to 58 of the agenda, which provided an overview of mental health services in the borough. The report was introduced by representatives from the various service providers in the borough, including the South West London Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM), Child and Adolescent mental Health Service (CAMS) and the Council's Adult Social Care team. A copy of presentation delivered can be found on the following link: -

[Overview of Mental Health Provision in the Borough](#)

Following the presentation, the Sub-Committee had the opportunity to ask questions about the information provided. It was noted that the waiting times for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) seemed to be high in Croydon and it was questioned whether there was a similar issue in other SLaM localities. In response, it was highlighted that Croydon was the only borough with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) pathway provided by SLaM and it was this pathway that had a significant waiting time. The numbers waiting for the ASD service had grown throughout the pandemic and work was underway to address the backlog with 100 appointments expected to be completed by April 2022 and a tender for further 450 appointments in 2022-23.

It was confirmed that the current waiting time for the ASD pathway was on average 52 weeks, which was not acceptable and the reason why tackling the backlog to manage demand against capacity was a priority. The Sub-Committee accepted that the backlog was being addressed but agreed that further scrutiny was needed at a later date to be reassured that the plans being developed were being effective. It was agreed that the Children & Young People Sub-Committee would be asked to keep the performance of CAMHS under review as part of its work programme in the forthcoming year.

It was noted from the information provided that staffing seemed to be an issue for mental health services and the partners were asked for their assessment of their key strengths and weaknesses. Partnership working was highlighted as a strength with recognition that no one service could address all the mental

health need in the borough. There was a committed workforce in Croydon with skilled staff, who tended to be loyal to the borough with staff development being a strength, however recruiting new staff was challenging.

It was recognised that the crisis pathway was an area for development, which was currently being addressed. It could also be challenging to move complex cases on from the Accident and Emergency department to other services. While early intervention in schools and child wellbeing practitioners was a strength that needed to be developed further.

An update was requested on the work to improve access to talking therapies through GPs surgeries. It was confirmed that patient access to talking therapies had been targeted for improvement as evidence indicated that once people arrived in the service their recovery rate was quicker. SLAM was working closely with colleagues across primary care as this was the most common source of referral and the introduction of primary care mental health practitioners would help to improve access to these services. There was also work underway to engage with the Asian community more effectively, including having more ethnic counselling options available.

As it was confirmed that the Public Health team had commissioned a new provider of drug and alcohol services, which would be interconnected with mental health services, it was questioned whether there would be sufficient outreach work to provide support to the street homeless in the borough, including those from Eastern Europe who may not have access to services. It was advised that there would be an expectation on a recourse to public funds approach, which was a challenge in Croydon given it was a location for the Home Office. The resource available for outreach work had doubled since 2019 and was already on the way to meeting national guidance. The service had been commissioned as it was recognised that there needed to be a service at the front door of the Council to support people with substance abuse issues.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair thanked the representatives from the various services who had given up their time to attend the meeting and engage with the Sub-Committee on the issue of mental health support in Croydon.

Conclusions

Following its discussion of this item, the Health and Social Care Sub-Committee reached the following conclusions: -

1. The information provided on the work of the partners involved in delivering mental health services in the borough was encouraging, although to make a more definitive judgement on the level of support available would require the provision of comparative data with other areas.
2. The Children & Young People Sub-Committee would be asked to follow-up on the work to reduce the waiting times for autism spectrum

disorder assessments with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

3. A follow-up on the support for rough sleepers, including drug and alcohol services would be scheduled for the Sub-Committee work programme in 2022-23.

12/22 **Healthwatch Croydon Update**

The Sub-Committee received a verbal update from Gordon Kay, the manager of Healthwatch Croydon on the most recent review completed by the service.

The most recently completed report was on [Personal Independence Coordinators](#), who helped people frequently attending the Accident and Emergency service, but who may need wider support. This review had been commissioned by Age UK and had included 64 interviews with users of the service, which revealed that in addition to physical and mental health support the provision of support with finance was also important.

The review had found that clients completing the programme tended to find their confidence had increased and they felt less stress. Although from the feedback provided 1 in 6 participants saw no improvement, 79% had seen a long-term impact. It was recommended that further work was targeted towards those who felt the programme had not worked to find out the reasons for this. It may be the case that there is a need for extra support for some once the service ended and that clearer signposting was needed to other services. Age UK had taken on these recommendations and would be introducing a new analysis tool for the programme and was looking to provide after support where needed.

13/22 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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