

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 24 January 2023.

Present	Cllr Stephan Fifield (Chair)	Cllr Steve Robinson
	Cllr Cate Cody	Cllr Pam Tracey MBE
	Cllr Terry Hale	Cllr Susan Williams
	Cllr Stephen Hirst	Cllr Suzanne Williams

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Lisa Spivey (Vice-Chair).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2022 were confirmed and agreed as a correct record of that meeting.

4. DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Siobhan Farmer, Director of Public Health for Gloucestershire, presented the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022/23. The theme of the report for this year is 'No Person is an Island: Social Connections in Gloucestershire'.

In this, her first annual report, the Director of Public Health, referred to the attached power-point presentation and highlighted the importance of social connections for good health and wellbeing. She explained that the report relayed some of the challenges that had been experienced to maintain social connections during the pandemic, and how this led to an increase in social isolation and loneliness. The report also provided an opportunity to showcase examples of work and activities to bring people together in Gloucestershire and made recommendations of proposed actions for individuals, communities and organisations to take forward to ensure Gloucestershire was a place which enabled connections.

Referring to the challenges experienced during the past three years, and specifically during the pandemic, it was estimated that over a million more adults throughout the UK had become chronically lonely during this time, impacting on young people, people living alone, people on low incomes or unemployed and people with mental health conditions. Despite the beginnings of recovery from the pandemic, the past year, (2022), had presented further challenges for many people. The war in Ukraine, the rising cost of living and the subsequent pressures on services that provide help to people, has emphasised the importance of the need to support one another other and to maintain social links and networks to keep everyone healthy and resilient.

It was reported that the impact on connecting had been witnessed across all ages and within all socioeconomic groups, although some groups had been more disproportionately affected than others, including children and younger people. It was suggested that, reduced opportunities to socialise with their peers had significantly contributed to feelings of loneliness amongst children and young people in Gloucestershire. Roughly a third of the students who had completed the Gloucestershire Pupil Wellbeing Survey during 2021-22 had indicated that the pandemic had adversely affected their wellbeing. Whilst impacting on the lives of every child in the country, the pandemic was likely to have had a particularly harmful impact on the estimated four million children and young people already living in poverty in the UK. On a more positive note, the pandemic had also brought new and innovative methods of communication, and had rallied communities into taking action to build on the benefits and values of increased social interaction.

Expanding on the differences between isolation and loneliness, it was explained that a lack of meaningful social connections can often lead to social isolation and loneliness. The words “social isolation” and “loneliness” are often used interchangeably, but are not the same thing. Social isolation is defined as ‘an objective state determined by the quantity of social relationships and contacts between individuals, across groups and communities.’ Loneliness can be defined as ‘a subjective state, based on a person’s emotional perception of the number and/or quality of social connections they need compared to what is currently being experienced’. People can be isolated, within a small social network, and yet not feel lonely; whilst people can feel lonely and yet be surrounded by people.

Highlighting the importance of ‘connecting’ as a means to improving people’s mental health, the Director of Public Health outlined the recommendations included in the report as ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’. These included; time spent with family and friends; joining a local community group or sports team; volunteering for a local charity; building up digital resilience to recognise and manage some of the risks people may come across when socialising or working online, and reaching out to those who may be at increased risk of isolation and loneliness.

Members also noted the recommendations included in the report to support connecting people within the wider community and to those impacted on by accessibility and environmental factors. Covering a large geographical area, Gloucestershire is recognised as being geographically challenging in terms of connecting people to friends, family, activities, and in delivering services to such a wide and largely rural area.

Other challenges include those impacting on communities and groups who experience particular disadvantages in relation to accessibility, transport and mobility, including older adults, those with disabilities, young people, and those in rural communities. Acknowledging the challenges to people living in remote and rural communities, a member also pointed out the issues of loneliness and isolation that can be experienced by people living in urban locations.

Members were advised that a ‘Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit’, had been produced from which to support health and social care organisations when

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developing or reviewing strategies, initiatives and service delivery plans to improve service provision and outcomes for the needs of local rural populations. Key advice to organisations was to embed 'rural proofing' as an integral part of its strategy and planning making processes and not to assume all rural areas are homogenous. Needs may vary according to settlement location and size.

Other recommendations directed towards organisations included:

- 1) To not forget the importance of social connections as a mental and physical health promoter and normalise these conversations within the workplace;
- 2) When designing new buildings/spaces, to maximise benefits for local communities and involve them in the process;
- 3) To consider how spaces within the workplace or organisation can be used to enable social contact, for both staff, service users and customers.
- 4) To sustainably invest in voluntary and community organisations who have a vital role;
- 5) To consider how the organisation might encourage and enable volunteering and community participation;
- 6) To expand community access to the organisation's buildings and outside spaces.
- 7) If relevant, to ensure services provided by the organisation to the public have both digital and face-to-face options.

Members noted the report and welcomed the work involved in addressing connectivity and accessibility issues. Acknowledging the positive feedback, the Director of Public Health encouraged members to share the report widely and to publicise the messages it contained.

One member asked for information on the TIC+ Charity, a Gloucestershire based charity, providing a range of mental wellbeing support for Children and Young People, including support provided to parents and carers via a Parents Support and Advice Line and from various parent support groups. It was noted that the Public Health Team only funded the TIC+ Chat element of the service offered by the charity.

Information on TIC+ usage covering the period 2018-2021 was circulated to members after the meeting and is attached to the minutes for information. For more details, please visit the charity website at the link [here](#)

The report was noted.

5. GLOUCESTERSHIRE SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

Paul Yeatman, Independent Chair of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board, and Sarah Jasper, Head of Safeguarding (Adults) at Gloucestershire County Council, introduced the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board GSAB Annual Report 2021/2022.

The report is produced as a statutory requirement of the Care Act 2014 and covers the period April 2021 to March 2022.

Referring to the challenges the Gloucestershire safeguarding partnership had experienced during the past year, members were informed that work to ensure the safety and well-being of adults with care and support needs continued. Although circumstances were far from normal and the partnership continued to operate in a pressured environment during the recovery period from the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts were being made to establish a “new” normal approach to the work.

In line with the current national position, the Gloucestershire Health and Social Care Systems has experienced unprecedented demand during the past year, and at the same time, had to cope with the challenge of staff isolating due to COVID, and current difficulties in the retention and recruitment of staff.

It was explained that, owing to a number of factors, the Gloucestershire systems have experienced an ever-increasing volume and complexity of safeguarding issues, many of which related to individuals experiencing severe and multiple disadvantages, including homelessness, contact with the criminal justice system, substance misuse, sex working and mental health. This was evidenced in a number of Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs).

In spite of the challenges of the past year, the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board has continued to maintain focus from a virtual system based approach, striving to deliver the objectives of the extended 3-year Strategic Plan 2018-2021: Improving Effectiveness of the Board, Improving Safeguarding Practice, Preventative Strategies and Making Safeguarding Personal. The Board has recently launched a new 3-year Strategic plan 2022-2025, with new and clear priorities for the next few years.

Another statutory requirement of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Board is to commission Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SAR's), set against certain criteria. During 2020/2021, the Board received 6 referrals from undertaking SAR's, of which one was proceeding to further review and another as a learning event. Three completed SARs were published during the past year.

The Safeguarding Board Sub Group continued to oversee implementation work on the recommendations of the three published SARs in order to ensure service improvements are embedded and maintained. The Sub Group also continued to respond to the findings and recommendations of the first National Analysis of Safeguarding Adults Reviews in England, undertaken to consider all published reviews during the period April 2017- March 2019, including those submitted by the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board.

Throughout the past year, the Workforce Development Group has continued to respond to ongoing challenges to recruitment and retention, with 12,478 Gloucestershire staff, (including volunteers), undertaking GSAB approved Safeguarding and Mental Capacity Act (MCA) courses. Some of the training was able to be delivered on a face-to-face basis during the final few months. It was

noted that, moving forward, training would be delivered from a 'blended' approach due to benefits identified from delivering training via remote access. Outlining some of the other work delivered by the Board and sub groups in the past year, members were informed that:

- 1) The Policy and Procedure Group was continuing with its annual review of all relevant Board policy and procedure documents;
- 2) A new Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) Framework had been commissioned, (with an anticipated launch date in 2022/3);
- 3) A 'virtual' annual care providers development day for trainers had been held in November, delivered via MS Teams.
- 4) The Multi-Agency Audit Group had undertaken audits on self-neglect, dementia and mental health enquiries, plus in-depth reviews of specific complex alcohol misuse/self-neglect and financial abuse issues.
- 5) Increased awareness of issues using a trauma informed approach from working with individuals with complex needs.
- 6) Work in Fire Safety Development had produced an action plan in alignment with the Fire Standards Board Prevention Standards. The action plan identified priorities for improving inter-agency working, including training frontline practitioners from all agencies to recognise fire risks in homes and to ensure that safeguarding is embedded in all fire risk reduction activity. A member requested that the fire safeguarding leaflet produced as a result of this work be shared with, and promoted by, local councillors. The request was noted.

Members welcomed the in-depth account provided by the report and asked that the latest version of the risk register referred to on page 7, (covering the period 2022-25 and linked to the new 2022-25 Strategic Plan), be circulated to the committee when available.

Acknowledging the work and invaluable contribution by the voluntary care sector, in particular Matt Lennard and the Voluntary Care Sector Alliance, the committee recognised the added pressures brought about by the demands of an increasing population. The 2021 Census reported that Gloucestershire's population was 645,076 in 2021. This represented an increase of 8.1%% between 2011-21, higher than the growth rate of 6.3% for England and Wales.

Questioning the impact of asylum seekers and refugees on the county, the committee was informed that an 'Asylum Seekers Board' established in November 2022, was dedicated to the health, care and safeguarding of asylum seekers and refugees in Gloucestershire.

Reflecting on challenges to staff retention and recruitment, a member asked about the size of the safeguarding team at the County Council and was informed that the current team comprised 6 and a half full time equivalents. Due to the extent of the work required by the team, plans were in place to expand this number, using funds from the Build Back Better Lives Fund. The merits of the helpdesk and the point of access team were noted.

Acknowledging expressions of appreciation to the various members of the Board, including Board Business Manager and the members of the various sub groups, the committee's attention was also drawn to the work and commitment of front-line practitioners, and to their continued support and commitment in developing and promoting work aimed at protecting and supporting adults.

The report was noted.

6. PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE REPORT

The committee received an update from the Director of Public Health.

To view the information report circulated with the agenda, please refer to the link [here](#).

Members recalled that, at the Full Council meeting on 9 November 2022, the council had considered a motion relating to concerns about the quality and cost of dentistry in Gloucestershire and on the principle that every Gloucestershire resident had the right to 'good oral hygiene' at affordable NHS rates. As part of the motion, the Council had asked the Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board and the Director of Public Health to give an update on activities to promote oral health hygiene to the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC).

The committee was informed that a report would be presented at the HOSC meeting on 31 January 2023, with specific focus on what was being done to promote good oral hygiene amongst children and young people. The report would be presented alongside a report from NHS England colleagues on access to dental treatment services. The oral health promotion report and the NHS dentistry report can be viewed [here](#).

Detailed updates on Childhood Obesity Levels in Gloucestershire and on the National Child Measurement Programme were provided. The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) measures the height and weight of children in reception class, (children aged 4 to 5), and in year 6, (children aged 10 to 11), in state schools across England every year. Trained nurses take the measurements, which are used to calculate a child-specific BMI score based on the child's age and gender.

Data from the programme details the proportion of children who are an unhealthy weight in England and within each region and county. The data is used to plan and develop services for children and families.

Data relating to obesity levels during the 2021/22 academic school year was published in December 2022, (the first full year of data collection since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic), with reports identifying a significant increase in levels of obesity and severe obesity during this period, in comparison to pre-pandemic levels. Recent data indicated a decrease in obesity levels in comparison to this time last year, but, nevertheless, rates remain significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels for Year 6 children, (aged 10 to 11 years).

Data for Gloucestershire is in line with national trends, with early signs of increasing obesity prevalence across the county. Such trends are often associated with poverty and health inequality. It was noted that Year 6 obesity levels for the county are significantly lower than the English averages, but remain a concern.

Later in the meeting, a member reiterated concerns about obesity levels in young children and proposed that the committee monitor the situation. It was agreed more work was required, including work to commission a specialist service following a cabinet decision in September 2022 to tender for a provider to deliver a countywide healthier lifestyles, (healthy weight), service for children and young people aged 4-17 years old, (up to 25 years for young people with special educational needs and disability).

Members noted information on the formation of the Gloucestershire Integrated Care Partnership, (ICP), referred to as the One Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Partnership (HWP). The HWP is made up of a broad range of organisations established to work together to improve the care, health and wellbeing of the people living in Gloucestershire. The One Gloucestershire Interim Integrated Care Strategy was agreed by the HWP and published on 22 December 2022.

The report was noted.

7. ADULT SOCIAL CARE UPDATE REPORT

The committee received an update from the Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing and Communities, on matters relating to the delivery of Adult Social Care in Gloucestershire. To view the information report presented at the meeting, please refer to the link [here](#)

Members attention was drawn to the Government's Autumn Statement and to the two year delay to progress the Care Act Reform. In spite of the delay, work to prepare for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment of local authorities and Integrated Care Systems, (effective from 1 April 2023), and to ensure the government's adult social care reform linked with the council's Transformation Programme continued. The Transformation Programme, at this date in the programme, was directed at improving efficiencies, productivity and performance from the refining of existing operating models and from the implementation of advanced digital solutions. A report on the actions being taken to prepare for CQC Assessment would be presented to the committee at its meeting on 7 March 2023.

It was confirmed that the 'fair cost of care exercise' the council had been required to undertake had been submitted on 14 October 2022. The Market Sustainability Plan, detailing activities on how the council intended to progress the outcomes of the exercise and ensure a fair cost of care, (if not already paid), had been produced. The results of the cost of care exercise had been submitted within the given timescales and in accordance with the prescribed format. It was anticipated that the outcomes and analysis of data from the exercise, (analysed within a local context), would be released in early February 2023.

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Members received an update on the cabinet decision taken in July 2022, relating to the decommissioning of four care homes within the Gloucestershire Care Partnership. All residents had vacated the care homes in August 2022. The care homes were now in the ownership of the council and being considered for future use.

Details of the move to initiate a hyper localised model of commissioning domiciliary care were noted. Members supported the move and agreed the new approach was a positive one. Members acknowledged the demands on the care system and supported the work being applied to provide more quality care for those in need, including people with dementia.

The report was noted.

8. CHIEF FIRE OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

The committee received a detailed overview of matters relating to the delivery of services within the portfolio of services covered by the Chief Fire Officer, (Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service), and within the remit of the Gloucestershire County Council Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee, (Trading Standards, Civil Protection and Coroners Services).

To view the full report, please open the link [here](#)

A member enquired into what actions were being taken to address cultural differences in people taking refuge in the county and the impact this might have on the work of the Trading Standards Team. The member asked that a briefing be included in a report to the committee at a future meeting and the request was noted.

The member also requested more detailed information on the Gloucestershire County Council Critical Incident Plan, (guidance on coordinating the County Councils' response to a critical incident/impact on service delivery).

Cllr Terry Hale reiterated strong concerns about the welfare and risks associated with free roaming sheep in the Forest of Dean District and of the lack of progress in arranging a meeting with representatives from each of the statutory organisations responsible for the welfare and safety of the sheep. Expressing his continued frustration, Cllr Hale asked that the Chief Fire Officer consider what action might be undertaken by the Trading Standards Team to address the situation. The Chief Fire Officer agreed to investigate the matter and report back to Cllr Hale.

The report was noted.

9. QUARTER 2 (2022/23) PERFORMANCE SCORECARD REPORT

The committee considered a detailed analysis of performance relating to the delivery of services within the remit of the Adult Social Care and Communities

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Scrutiny Committee. The analysis was produced by the County Council's Performance & Improvement Team, based on data to the end of September 2022.

Healthwatch Gloucestershire questioned the lack of matrix data recorded in the performance report and enquired whether the data would be available in the future? It was explained that, during the Pandemic, it had been necessary to take a different approach to the collection and reporting of data. It was agreed that this may now be an opportunity to re-evaluate the position.

A member questioned some of the target symbols referred to in the report, including those recorded against child obesity targets. It was agreed to review, and where necessary, amend the symbols.

The information was noted.

10. WORK PLAN

The committee work plan was noted.

At the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 December 2022, the committee agreed to make a recommendation to the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee (ASCC) asking that it 'consider the possibility of establishing a scrutiny task group to look at social care staff shortages and retention, (subject to whether the issue was already being considered as part of the committee work plan)'.

As a member of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and as Chair of the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Stephan Fifield, requested that officers produce a briefing note for consideration at this meeting regarding the Recruitment and Retention of Staff in the Independent Sector. The briefing note circulated prior to the meeting can be viewed [here](#).

Members noted the information and agreed to continue to receive periodical updates regarding the 'recruitment and retention of staff in the independent sector' as part of the regular committee information reporting process. Chair of the Committee, Cllr Stephan Fifield, suggested that the issue be the subject of a twice yearly review by the committee, and this was agreed. The reviews to be supplemented by relevant updates, as and when required, including the reporting of specific data by the Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing and Communities.

The suggestion was supported by the committee, with a request that Cllr Fifield report the outcome of the committee's decision to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28 February 2023, (in addition to any future updates that might be appropriate to report to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee).

The dates of meetings pre possible changes in the membership of the committee were confirmed as: -

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7 March 2023

16 May 2023

The dates of meetings for the rest of the year were confirmed as:

18 July 2023

12 September 2023

14 November 2023

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 12.10pm