

Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Report from the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health

16 May 2023 – Adult Social Care Update

Gloucestershire Market Sustainability Plan

The Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care (MS&FCoC) Fund was first allocated in 2022 with guidance for use which included conditions that a “Fair Cost of Care” exercise was carried out with providers of bed-based care for over 65’s and domiciliary care for over 18’s. Councils were required to publish the outcome of the Fair Cost of Care exercise in February and a Market Sustainability Plan in March 2023. From 2023 the MS&FCoC fund will become the Market Sustainability and Improvement (MS&I) fund.

Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) carried out the Fair Cost of Care Exercise last year and results were duly published in February of this year. The findings were:

1. There is a gap between the median average cost identified by providers of bed-based care and the mean average price paid by GCC.
2. There is a lesser gap between the median average cost identified by providers of domiciliary care and the mean average price paid by GCC.

The gaps between costs identified and fees paid are influenced by local factors, for care homes these are:

- a high percentage of self-funding individuals
- a high proportion of facilities offering premium services outside the fee levels affordable to GCC
- our contract prices are comparatively low
- the inclusion in the exercise of a period of extraordinary inflation which is not expected to be permanent
- provider calculations for return on capital and operations varied and are reflected in the high unit costs
- An excess of empty beds in some areas which increases running costs

Whilst these factors do call in to question the actual figures identified the gap between costs and fees is gap is recognised as a market concern.

The Gloucestershire Market Sustainability Plan was published on 27th March 2023 and comprises three sections:

- An assessment of current market sustainability
- An analysis of future market changes
- A plan to address sustainability.

It recognises some of the extraordinary pressure the care provider market is facing currently: workforce capacity; difficulties in recruitment and retention; competition for labour; high inflation; and increased levels of need in those supported. It notes that many of these pressures are not likely to reduce, particularly given the ageing demographic and that demand for dementia and nursing bed-based care often exceeds the capacity available whilst there is over capacity in residential bed-based care. Finally, it proposes measures to support Market Sustainability going forward which will also address our commissioning intentions.

1. It is proposed that a 1% one-off payment is made to the whole market to go some way to offset the extraordinary inflation felt in 2022-23. This will be funded by the MS&FCoC fund (for the OP market) and funds that were set aside for contractual inflation to cover an expected National Insurance increase that was then rescinded (for the Disability market). This proposal awaits an Executive Member decision.
2. The inflationary uplift for 2023-24 will be at a higher percentage than previously at 6.92% for bed-based care and 6.83% for community-based care. This will be funded by the MS&I fund and the Better Care Fund.
3. It is proposed that bed-based provision for nursing and dementia will receive an additional uplift of 4% to incentivise the provision of these services. Residential beds will not receive an uplift. In recognition of the variety of fee rates the uplift will only be applied to fees under the new rate. Any provision

paid at a rate exceeding this will not receive an uplift. This proposal will be funded by the MS&I fund and awaits an Executive Member decision.

4. A review of domiciliary care purchasing practices in 2022 revealed that there were improvements to be made that would support providers to offer increased capacity and ensure their businesses remain stable. The “Hyper-Local” commissioning initiative addresses our commissioning intention to reduce reliance on bed-based care and increase community provision. A search tool has been devised enabling brokers to source care packages from providers locally based to the person needing support. Providers are incentivised through block contracts in the rural areas and an increased rate in urban super local output areas where waiting times are an issue. The measures have seen an increase in domiciliary care packages, and a reduction in package waiting times.
5. Proud to Care continues to support providers with recruitment in their local areas utilising the same search tool that Brokerage use to identify areas where there are potential job seekers. They work with local resources to advertise and promote care jobs and offer a matching service to help job seekers to find work that will suit them and that they can get to.
6. A review of the development offer for external staff will be undertaken to consider how to facilitate the staff skills mix needed by the market to deliver services to people with higher levels of need. Work will then be undertaken to improve and enhance the current offer.

CQC Assurance

CQC’s assurance of adult social care will be focusing on how we work with people; how we provide support; how we ensure safety within the system and leadership. CQC have recently published their approach for integrated care systems, and there will be focusing on quality and safety, integration and leadership. We will now begin to work with the ICB on our shared preparedness in these areas.

CQC will be working with five volunteer local authorities between April and September to develop their methodology. All other local authorities can expect to be part of an assurance process from October 2023 onwards; we are expecting further details on the timeframe to be published later this year.

We have started an engagement programme on what we are saying in our self-assessment. This is involving our teams, corporate teams who work with adult social care, our partnership boards and the NHS. By the beginning of June, we will be able to use this feedback to improve our self-assessment. We are also collating documents which show evidence of our impact and of the voices of people with experience of our services.

Warmth on Prescription

The Warmth on Prescription scheme was initiated in winter 2021-22 to support people to keep warm and pay their fuel bills in Gloucestershire. Studies show people with respiratory conditions are less likely to suffer poor health if the temperature of their property is maintained at between 18 and 21c. The project was a partnership with Energy Systems Catapult and Severn Wye Energy. A cohort of people with respiratory problems were referred to Severn Wye Energy by a mix of GPs and social prescribers in two of our districts, Gloucester and the Forest of Dean. A total of 28 people joined the pilot and received payments towards their fuel bills. The scheme was well received by households who took part, and an evaluation was carried out with participants, among comments received were:

"I normally end up in hospital in some of the colder months, I tend to get pneumonia, pleurisy, flu and stuff, which does land me in hospital. The last time it almost landed me in intensive care. This year, I didn't actually need to see the doctor at all..."

The media coverage of both the pilot scheme and this winter's scheme has been extensive, and we have had coverage online, on television and radio and in newspapers across UK, Europe, the USA and Australia.

The decision was made to provide an increased Warmth on Prescription offer for 2022-23 using the Household Support Fund (HSF) monies that are held by the County Council to support people in need. The programme focused on people with a respiratory long-term condition who are living in fuel poverty and referrals were made via GPs and social prescribers to ensure funds went to those most at risk of escalating health and care needs. The HSF team in the Council were key to ensuring the extension of the programme through this winter and channelled funds directly to Severn Wye to support the programme. The scheme was extended to 150 households this winter, covering the whole of Gloucestershire.

As well as supporting with fuel bills the scheme also offers other energy saving measures and advice through the Warm and Well programme which Severn Wye have been running on behalf of the district councils, county council and health for over twenty years. This also meant in some cases savings in carbon were produced as less fuel was used.

An opportunity arose early in 2023 to expand the scheme to offer support with fuel bills to people undergoing treatment for cancer, in particular chemotherapy. This assisted treatment and reduced the chance of infection for a group of people who have suppressed immune systems due to their treatment. A further 25 people were supported using the additional funds. We already fund advice and support for oncology patients through a project with Citizens Advice Gloucestershire, a scheme which has helped patients claim benefits worth a total of over a million pounds per year.

Evaluation of the scheme is taking place both in Gloucestershire and other pilots in the UK. Meetings have been held with government departments about wider provision and funds have been identified for a further scheme in the county for next winter, 2023-24.

Community Meals

Background

In September 2021 a paper was presented to Cabinet requesting approval for the re-commissioning of a community meals service. The role of community meals service

is non statutory but supports older and vulnerable adults, so they are able to maintain or regain their independence and remain living in their own home for as long as possible. The Cabinet decision taken was to reprocure a community meals service. However, publication of the tender was delayed so wasn't advertised until November 2022, (with the aim of starting in April 2023).

Unfortunately, Gloucestershire County Council didn't receive any bids to deliver this service. When approached on why they had not bid, the current provider, Apetito Ltd. advised that the contract was no longer financially viable.

The failed tender occurred in December 2022, at this time there were 481 recipients of the GCC funded meals service. Due to the short timescale and the large number of individuals in receipt of meals the decision was taken to seek a short-term replacement service.

Whilst the Adult's commissioning team were seeking alternative provision, the adult social care Locality teams were contacting the current users of the service to discuss their needs with regard to community meals. The information gleaned from the phone calls to users of the service was used to support decisions on the type of support that was needed, where in the county it was needed. During the phone calls the team discovered that a number of people receiving meals from Apetito had already sourced an alternative or no longer needed a community meal. This exercise revealed that there were only 80 people requiring a community meal.

Action taken to secure a new provider(s)

Six new providers have been engaged on short contracts of between six and 12 months. Three of the new providers are local charities, two local community interest companies and one local small business.

This move from a countywide delivery to this more localised approach is in line with our aims of supporting people to stay to their own homes and communities for longer and connecting residents to local facilities and resources. Working with voluntary and community sector agencies in this way also helps stimulate and support our active communities programme.

Five of the providers are delivering plated meals directly to those who use the service. However, in Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and North Cotswolds we were unable to find a provider who could fulfil this function. Instead, we have commissioned a local business to deliver frozen meals. Based on our adult social care teams review of those in receipt of meals, those who are not able to reheat a meal themselves have been allocated a visit from a domiciliary care provider to reheat and serve the meal. Initial feedback suggests this is working well.

The move to new providers in a very short period of time meant that there was little scope to negotiate on price, as the priority was to maintain service provision. Therefore, the cost of the service has increased. Previously the cost to the individual was £3.50 and GCC paid a further contribution of £1.99. From 1 April the cost of a two-course meal is £5 to the individual and subsidies vary for GCC from £2 up to £10 (in a very small number of cases). The community meal service remains open for new referrals.

Looking forward

Adults Commissioning and Operations Teams are reviewing the learning from the work undertaken and will prepare a report for the Adult's Cabinet Members with recommendations for how we procure community meals moving forward.

Improving Urgent and Emergency Care

On 15 November last year, the joint meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny and Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committees received a briefing on work to improve the urgent and emergency care system (UEC) in Gloucestershire. The briefing included the findings from a diagnostic completed by the consultancy Newton Europe and the feedback from a Local Government Association peer review. Both suggested there were improvements to be made and that a system-wide transformation programme was needed.

Since then, health and social care leaders have carefully considered the feedback and how to deliver the transformation needed and at pace, in time to effect change for next winter. The Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board took the decision to commission

an improvement partner to support the UEC transformation programme. In the interests of expediency, Gloucestershire County Council has led the commissioning process. And on 29 March Cabinet approved direct award of the improvement partner contract to Newton Europe via an intermediary called Bloom.

Work on the transformation programme has already started and adult social care is a key partner in this work. Further updates on this work will be provided to this committee.