



To:
Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cabinet Member for Care Services

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Date 07 March 2023
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BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

Summary: This is a letter from the Adult Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Care Services following the meeting of the Panel on 31 January 2023. It covers Adult Services Transformation Programme, Options Appraisal for Assistive Technology and Community Alarms and Performance Monitoring.

Dear Cllr Gibbard

The Panel met on 31 January 2023 to receive an update on the Adult Services Transformation Programme and a briefing on the Options Appraisal for Assistive Technology and Community Alarms and to discuss the Performance Monitoring Report for November 2022.

We would like to thank you, Dave Howes, Amy Hawkins, Lucy Friday and Peter Field for attending to present the items and answer the Panel's questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learned from the discussion, share the views of the Panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response.

Adult Services Transformation Programme

We queried to what extent analysis of the social determinants of care are being used across the Council's remit. We heard that the approach taken in Adult Services and Tackling Poverty, with the Transformation Programme, is to focus on the early help offer focussing on income, employability, people's food security and other wider social

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determinants of health and care and that there are a number of programmes and initiatives to support this. We were pleased to hear this but slightly concerned that in the current climate these determinants are likely to shift very quickly so need to be monitored. We were informed it links to the work being undertaken around community resilience and building up strong communities and networks.

We welcomed the intent to work with other organisations collaboratively and operate as networks and queried if information known as 'network theory' (how to make networks work more effectively by doing certain things that sometimes they don't do) is being used. We heard the Department would be taking forward some of the principles we mentioned, particularly when looking at the early help offer, but not in its entirety, but it is something you will take on board.

We feel the Transformation Programme relies heavily on assistive technology as it will determine how much the transformation of Social Services will progress. Officers agreed that the Assistive Technology Strategy and the decisions behind it are fundamental to much of the transformation agenda which is all about promoting independence and allowing people to live within their own homes. You added that assistive technology has huge potential, but it is just one tool and needs to go hand in hand with all the other developments.

We mentioned the workforce programme and asked about the current situation in attracting people to work for the Council. We heard that the Directorate is looking at a number of different strategies. In terms of care provision you are still proactively promoting vacancies and have been successful recently in recruiting domiciliary care staff and day staff. We noted that retention is also a key element of the workforce programme to make sure you hold on to staff and grow the workforce.

In relation to the social work structure, we were informed that the timeline has been revised to the proposal being agreed by July 2023 with implementation dependent on the option agreed.

A member of the Panel queried where the practical element fitted into the programme as they found it very theoretical and strategic. We heard that the Transformation Programme is about improvements and change and doing things differently as opposed to the business-as-usual activity and we received reassurance that it is part of a large delivery approach to support individuals.

Options Appraisal for Assistive Technology and Community Alarms

We heard the options appraisal had been completed and the decision in April 2022 was to go with option two – retain community alarms and assistive technology in-house and develop the assistive technology offer. We agreed option two seems the best option. Officers confirmed point 3.1 in the paper gives the updated position to November/December 2022 and that currently pressures still remain in terms of budget implications. We heard investment is needed in terms of resource to grow the service and that posts have been extended for a further 12 months with the intention to build the 'invest to save' picture. We also heard that there isn't adequate performance information but this is being improved, and the service is not actively being promoted but this is being addressed.

We queried how much assistive technology will cross the boundary between social care and the NHS and if this has been explored. We heard the majority of referrals are coming through from therapy teams and with performance information improving, this information can be shared confidentially with partners and the assistive technology offer is also being brought into the forum of the Home First regional programme.

We were not clear about the intended relationship between Social Services and Health in its widest description and believed there is a move in the UK towards monitoring patients at home. We queried if this is the kind of partnership this region would want to move towards and which sounds better than option two which the region is currently working towards. We heard that current ways of working with partners in Health focus primarily on what you do and who you work with now but that there are opportunities to make this better in the future. We also heard that some pilots have been explored locally and regionally but that the prevailing need is for hands on care. The Director added that you are at the early stages as a partnership and will not move away from the more limited approach until properly as a partnership you decide to get behind it or not. We noted that regionally a digital transformation board has been established but is a long way off having a fully worked up integrated digital strategy, that picks up opportunities and provides clarity about what will be delivered by councils and what will be delivered by health boards.

We mentioned the demonstration suite for community alarms and queried if there is an opportunity for Local Area Coordinators (LACs) to highlight the provision to people, as they are on the ground and do a lot of good work preventing people going into hospital and when they come home. Officers felt this was a fantastic opportunity and is something they will flag and will make sure LACs are aware of the provision.

Performance Monitoring

We were briefed on the performance report for November 2022 and were informed that performance is improving at the start of 2023.

We received confirmation that 90% of carers are being offered a carers assessment but only 50% of those being offered an assessment are taking up the offer and there are various reasons for this. We felt cost may be a reason and were informed there are two aspects to care and support packages. Firstly, support for carers (unpaid carers) – there is no charge for this if they are the carer of a person with a care and support package. Secondly, the cared for person (someone who has care and support needs) – this is an assessed service so there is a financial assessment.

We discussed how during Covid assessments had to be carried out online and we queried if the Directorate has gone back to doing face-to-face assessments. We heard it is currently a mix of online and face-to-face assessments, depending on what works for the individual.

We raised the issue of long-term sickness and queried if many staff suffered with long covid. We were informed that there has been an improvement in long-term sickness and long covid is not now one of the main causes.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised, however in this instance, a formal written response is not required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Jones." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and a trailing flourish.

SUSAN JONES
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