

Directors Report

The pressures across the health and social care system remain significant with increased demand and the inability to recruit staff resulting in delays in social care assessments, access to Reablement, access to homecare and access to Mental Health in-patient beds. We continue to work with our system partners to mitigate the risks.

Community Wellbeing Hub

Virgin Care have been instrumental in leading the development and operation of the Community Wellbeing Hub, alongside colleagues from 3SG, their members, BSWCCG and the Council. The Hub has provided a single point of access for community response and provides a joined-up intervention for anyone seeking support or guidance on COVID-19. Response teams include food support, welfare support, mental wellbeing, housing support and physical wellbeing advice.

After more than a year of delivering emergency support to residents across Bath and North East Somerset during the Covid-19 pandemic, the third sector organisation, 3SG is stepping down from providing volunteer support for delivering shopping and medication for vulnerable residents through the Community Wellbeing Hub. This decision was taken by 3SG based on the easing of restrictions and referrals from the Community Wellbeing Hub significantly reducing. The Community wellbeing Hub has in place a range of support services for those self-isolating and vulnerable and can continue to support individual's needs. Through the Covid19 Contain Outbreak Management Fund a proposal will be submitted for the continued engagement of volunteers in B&NES so as this valued community asset can be utilized in the future should demand rise, allow for support from volunteers to again resume and be stepped up to meet need as part of the wider work of Compassionate Communities.

The Hub continues to support residents who have been shielding (CEV) and those self-isolating, this has now been extended to the Hub working in collaboration with Track and Trace colleagues to undertake follow up welfare calls to people who are self-isolating and referred to the Community Wellbeing Hub for their individual support needs to be assessed.

Virgin Care Contract Extension

BSWCCG Governing Body and B&NES Council, as joint commissioners, have requested a report setting out an options appraisal to help to decide whether it wishes to extend the Virgin Care contract. This is a seven-year contract from 2017/18 to 2023/2024 with the option for BSWCCG and B&NES Council to extend the contract term by three years, taking the contract term to 2026/2027. Virgin Care would need to be notified of the decision to extend or not to extend the contract by no later than end of March 2022. The aim is for the options appraisal report to proceed through the decision-making governance for both BSWCCG and the Council by September 2021, but we recognise that this is an ambitious timescale and the decision-making process may require longer.

A timescale has been agreed for the decision-making process for both BSWCCG and Council

Specialist Social Prescribing Service

One of the strategic priorities for both the BaNES locality and across BSW CCG is to ensure that people can access NICE compliant Autism Diagnostic Assessments in a timely way. Unfortunately, as a result of the pandemic local diagnostic services delivered by BASS were suspended because clinical staff were redeployed. The waiting list for assessments has now grown. Some people have been waiting more than a year and referral rates for assessments are rising, as we return to 'business as usual'.

To help mitigate the risks associated with long waits for diagnostic assessments we have commissioned the Specialist Social Prescribing Service from Developing Health and Independence (DHI) which will run as a 12-month pilot from May 2021. People waiting for their Autism Diagnostic Assessment will be offered up to 4 appointments with the new service. Social prescribing is designed to support people with a wide range of social, emotional or practical needs, and there is a growing body of evidence that it can lead to a range of positive health and wellbeing outcomes. Studies have pointed to improvements in quality of life and emotional wellbeing, mental and general wellbeing, and levels of depression and anxiety (The Kings Fund).

Working in partnership with the BASS Autism Support Service, the new DHI SSPS will be offered to adults in B&NES who are on the diagnostic assessment waiting list. The service has excellent knowledge of both statutory and non-statutory, local community and web-based services, resources and pathways. It is outcome and solution-focused, person-centred, and will build on the strengths of individuals and their support networks. The service outcomes and activity will be independently evaluated by the Centre for Applied Autism Research at the University of Bath.

Care Homes

We are pleased to report that despite the increase in community rates of Covid infections, infections have remained extremely low in care homes with no more than one or two infections at any one time and no further deaths related to Covid since before Easter 2021. These infections, where they have occurred, are specific to staff with no new infections amongst residents since February 2021. We have continued to work closely with Public Health, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Primary Care Networks (PCNs), Royal United Hospital (RUH) and community teams to ensure that infection and control messages continue and levels of vaccinations within our care homes are at or above national levels.

With the high numbers of deaths in the last 18mths and a continuing preference for homecare over a care home placement, many of our homes have high levels of vacancies.

For residents the choice of remaining at home, supported by home care to maintain their independence also supports the Council's priority. However, it is putting some care homes at potential risk of closure or significant financial pressure. Therefore, the commissioning team are working closely with all care homes to consider and develop their business models. This may involve closure for one or two, or diversification or consolidation for others. Currently one home has identified they are looking to close. This home is rated Requires Improvement

by CQC (Care Quality Commission) and is part of two homes run by the same organisation in B&NES (the other is rated Good and has vacancies). The Commissioning Team has initiated the Provider Failure Policy and will be working with the home to transfer the 16 residents to the provider's other home or suitable alternatives. While this will cause some upheaval for residents, we will work with the provider to minimise disruption for residents.

Home Care

In contrast home care is in significant demand and the commissioning team are working closely with providers to support new capacity into B&NES. This is proving challenging as the combination of Covid and Brexit has meant that both locally and nationally there are significant recruitment issues. All home care providers, and indeed care homes, are struggling to recruit and retain their workforce. This is a significant issue that should be noted as a risk. B&NES has supported a recruitment drive with Proud to Care¹ to help providers, but the core issue remains that there are not enough people available to be recruited into these roles.

In addition, we are working with our in-house services (community resource centres and extra care) to see how they can help. Charlton House Nursing home was successfully able to offer an alternate to Sulis Community Hospital ward while it was closed and is exploring what further help can be developed to offer an extension of the extra care service into the wider community (this will be subject the CQC registration).

Infection Prevention and Control Funds (IPC)

The team have successfully distributed £6,143,642 of additional funding to care homes, home care and third sector organisations to help them through the pandemic through the national IPC funds. This has supported shielding, testing, vaccination, recruitment, staffing and wider infection control measures. In addition, the team have supported the provision of free PPE to all care providers across B&NES. The majority of the funding has gone directly to providers with significant reporting required by Government to show how funds have been spent. Providers have been extremely helpful in joining forums to discuss how best to use this funding and ensure, despite tight deadlines, that the funding is directed to areas of most concern. The Government have just announced a further round of funding.

Community Health and Social Care

The team also works closely with the CCG to commission and support wider services in the community. A single member decision was made earlier in Spring to bring the Community Equipment contract in-house and the planning will bring this transfer to the Council in Spring 2022.

¹ <https://www.proudtocaresw.org.uk/>

Better Care Fund

Better Care Fund (BCF) is a national scheme that directs the use of existing and additional sums of money given to Councils and CCGs to work together. These schemes are agreed by the B&NES Health and Wellbeing Board and encompass a wide range of work with over 39 individual projects. New projects were agreed in Spring 2021 from across the partnership and a further set of schemes will be agreed in the summer 2021. Projects include, support to mental health, housing adaptations, an assisted technology review, expanding trusted assessors, supporting the development of day services.

Transformation

The Directorate has 7 main areas for transformation. The first Board meeting will be in July and all projects are in the process of developing project plans and Business Cases. The projects are focused on delivering improved outcomes for residents and providing value for money. They are focused on prevention and early help across a range of services.

Alison Elliott

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July 2021