

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

18 NOVEMBER 2021

**REPORT OF ADULT
SOCIAL CARE AND
HEALTH SELECT
COMMITTEE**

CABINET DECISION

Lead Cabinet Members: Deputy Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture – Cllr Jim Beall; Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care – Cllr Ann McCoy

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF MULTI-AGENCY SUPPORT TO CARE HOMES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (TASK & FINISH)

SUMMARY

The attached report presents the outcomes of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's task and finish review of Multi-Agency Support to Care Homes during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) / DECISION(S)

This topic was included on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2021-2022. The review is now complete, and the recommendations have been endorsed by the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee for submission to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommend that:

- 1) Further to existing arrangements already in place regarding engagement with service-users and their loved ones, any current and future multi-agency professional group that is convened to support care homes ensures that the voice of residents and their families / carers is clearly articulated (whether through direct representation or via another appropriate mechanism). This should continue to include:
 - How care home providers gain information and feedback from clients and their families
 - How the Care Quality Commission (CQC) gains information and feedback from clients and their families
 - How the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) contracting team gains information and feedback from clients and families
 - How Social Workers and other Adult Social Care professionals gain information, views and feedback in their assessments / ongoing contact / reviews
 - How the safeguarding teams gain information and feedback
 - How the Care Home Protection Group gains information and feedback

- 2) Mindful of potential developments in vaccination requirements for the care sector as a whole, efforts continue by SBC and its partners to reach-out to those staff who remain reluctant to receive a COVID-19 vaccination.
- 3) The Care Home Protection Group continues on a permanent basis.

DETAIL

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted, and continues to impact, all aspects of life, and the care sector has been particularly affected. The health and wellbeing of residents and staff in care homes has gained a high degree of national attention since the emergence of COVID-19, and the recent easing of the latest national lockdown restrictions provided an opportunity to reflect on partnership-working between local care providers and wider support agencies.
2. It is widely recognised that the last year-and-a-half has been a very difficult and sensitive time for all those employed within health and social care, and even more so for those individuals (and their families) who have contracted, and suffered from, Coronavirus. The Council (and its wider health partners) has long-established strong partnership-working principles, much of which has been tested to the maximum since the pandemic emerged. The need to adapt to the ever-changing COVID-19 scene has meant being flexible and innovative in terms of the support provided (sometimes within the confines of funding restrictions / uncertainties), and it is now appropriate to consider how any new approaches / practices have been received by local care providers.
3. This task and finish review allows the Council and its partners to showcase the support provided to local care homes / nursing homes, as well as raise any previous or current issues / concerns. Such information will assist in further strengthening partnerships with local care providers as all agencies continue to manage the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Additionally, it may also help provide assurance to residents and their families of the measures that have been / are being put in place to safeguard all those within a setting.
4. Whilst it was proposed to examine this from a holistic perspective rather than at an individual care home / nursing home level, the ability to assess key data in relation to local care home providers would give a useful overview of the past and present situation across the Borough. However, it is acknowledged that figures alone do not give a full picture, and that care homes and wider partners deal with differing circumstances regarding the health status / needs of residents and the varying types of care settings.
5. The Task and Finish Group received a comprehensive presentation outlining the support given to local care homes by the Council and its wider health and care partners since the emergence of COVID-19. Further to this, the Group reflected upon a number of care home-related updates which had been provided to the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee in the last 18 months, as well as the findings and subsequent actions undertaken regarding two scrutiny reviews the Committee had completed involving care homes, namely *Care Homes for Older People* (pre-COVID) and *Hospital Discharge (Phase 1)* (discharge to care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic).

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

6. Ever since the pandemic emerged, there has been a high degree of public / media interest in, and comment on, the impact of COVID-19 within care homes. Much has been said and written about a range of associated concerns including the consequences of discharging patients without a COVID test in the initial stages of the pandemic, and the perception that care homes were somewhat of an after-thought, even ignored, when compared to the NHS.

For those using local care home services, and their families / carers, this review has provided an opportunity to highlight the support given to these settings by health and care partners during these very difficult times. It may also help provide assurance to existing, and potential future, residents and their loved ones of the measures that have been / are being put in place to safeguard all those within a care home environment.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

7. There are no direct implications in the report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8. There are no financial implications identified at this stage.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. There are no legal implications identified at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

10. The review is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

11. The review involved the assessment of support given to care homes that cover the whole Borough, therefore was not Ward-specific.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

12. None.

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