

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Thursday, 7th May, 2020

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Cusworth, R. Elliott, Jarvis, Jepson, Keenan, Mallinder, Napper, Taylor, Tweed, Walsh and Wyatt.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

170. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Wyatt declared a personal interest in agenda item 6, Financial Support for Learning Disability Day Opportunity Providers during the Covid-19 Pandemic, as he had a family member who accessed these services.

171. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

172. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items requiring the exclusion of the press and public.

173. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR OLDER PEOPLE'S RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 11 May 2020 in respect of Financial Support for Older People's Residential Care Homes during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health and the Assistant Director - Strategic Commissioning attended the meeting to present the report and to answer members' questions.

The report stated that the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care had written to all local authorities on 19 March 2020 outlining the financial support that would be made available to support the response to Covid-19 with regards to the provision of adult care services. In the time since the letter had been received the Council had been allocated two un-ringfenced grants totalling £16.2million that were to be used to support Adult Social Care and other Council services impacted by Covid-19. The report stated that the Secretary of State had specifically reminded local authorities for the need, and of their obligation to support the Adult care provider market in their local area.

The Secretary of State's letter highlighted that the funding should be utilised to support specific activities surrounding supporting home care providers and the care home sector. It was noted that the requirement to protect the cash flow of home care providers had been addressed by a delegated officer decision taken in April 2020.

The report detailed the specific areas that then Secretary of State had highlighted as key areas that should be targeted for support. These included:

- Helping providers deal with the costs of increased workforce pressures due to higher sickness absence caused by the outbreak
- Facilitating arrangements for adjusting packages as required in a timely and non-bureaucratic way, especially where providers are having to operate beyond normal services in order to respond to need.
- Helping providers to meet costs associated with enhanced infection control and the protection of staff.
- Finding supportive and creative ways to support providers in handling wider pressures caused by Covid-19.

The report stated that care homes were, like all other areas of Adult Care, feeling the impact of Covid-19, in that they were incurring additional costs within a low profit margin business model. It was noted that particular pressures included:

- Increased PPE costs, hand gels and increased costs for routine supplies.
- Accepting admissions at short notice to people discharged from hospital, or where regular informal support ceases to be available for example due to carer illness.
- Higher sickness absence rates among their workforce, especially with staff self-isolating.
- Statutory Sick Pay being paid from the first day of illness, rather than from the fourth day, and the requirements for workers to self-isolate.
- Increased cost pressures from higher use of agency staff.

It was noted that the impact of any one of these pressures could threaten the stability of the Council's supply of care home beds and consequently have a negative impact on the wider health and social care system in Rotherham. In order to mitigate against the impact of these pressures it was proposed that the money allocated to by the Secretary of State

should be used by the Council to provide direct financial support to the 33 Independent Sector Care Homes for Older People that were currently operating in the Borough.

The report provided details of various options that had been considered on how to best support care homes financially during the pandemic. It was recommended that a programme of cash grants be implemented where each care home in the Borough would be awarded a fixed upfront payment of £15,000 to support their additional expenditure as a result of Covid-19 over a 12-week period and that payments be backdated to 1 April 2020. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health advised that a budget of £450,000, along with £100,000 of contingency funding was being proposed and noted that the scheme of support would be reviewed after 12 weeks of operation. It was noted that this solution would provide the best support all Older People's Care Homes in Rotherham and consequently the wider Health and Social Care system. The alternative options that had been considered and their reasons for rejection were detailed in the officer's report.

Members asked how the proposed scheme to support care homes during the pandemic would impact on the Council's cashflow. The Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health advised that the grants that had been received were to support the wider provision of adult care in the Borough and not just care homes, and that as the money that had been given to the Council by the Government for this specific purpose the proposed scheme would not impact on the Council's cashflow. The Strategic Director noted that the proposed scheme would however have a positive impact on the cashflow of care homes in the Borough, and as such would enable them meet the financial challenges that the pandemic had presented therefore ensuring the sustainability of the care home sector in the Borough into the future.

Members asked how care homes were managing with regard to caring for residents who were convalescing after being discharged from hospital after recovering from Covid-19 and asked whether these residents were isolated from other residents in the homes. The Strategic Director advised that substantial guidance on infection control in residential homes was available and that this guidance was being closely adhered to in care homes. The Strategic Director assured members that care home providers across the Borough were being supported effectively in order to ensure effective infection control was being implemented and maintained in all care homes. Members also sought assurance on the auditing procedures around the extra costs being incurred by care homes in managing their response to the pandemic. The Assistant Director - Strategic Commissioning noted that all returns submitted by care homes on extra costs incurred would be subject to a rigorous audit process, but noted that the amount and detail of information submitted did vary between the larger and smaller homes due to the level of resource that each home had to provide the required information.

Members asked how the Council was working with care homes in order to manage the discharge processes into care homes and whether the target times for managing Covid-19 discharges were being met. The Strategic Director advised that procedures around the discharge process were working well and that the target of a turnaround times of three hours was being met. The Strategic Director assured members that discharge processes and timescales would be closely monitored as hospitals returned to more normal operating procedures.

Members asked for further information on the current situation regarding care homes that had had an embargo placed on them from taking new residents due to Covid-19 outbreaks. The Strategic Director advised that the number of care homes with embargos on taking new residents changed on a daily basis due to the complex nature of how such embargos were applied, but assured members that the situation was constantly monitored. The Assistant Director noted that the criteria under which a care home would be prevented from taking new residents had changed since the start of the pandemic.

Members asked about how the grants received from the Government to support adult social care were being used to support home care providers. The Strategic Director provided information on the delegated officer decision taken on 1 April 2020 regarding changing the way that home care providers were paid during the pandemic that would mitigate negative financial impacts of home care providers during this period. The Strategic Director noted that the decision had been able to be taken under delegated authority as the changes required could be financed within existing approved budgets.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

174. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING DISABILITY DAY OPPORTUNITY PROVIDERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Councillor Wyatt who had declared an interest in this item took no part in the discussion and subsequent vote.

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 11 May 2020 in respect of Financial Support for Learning Disability Day Opportunity Providers during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health and the Assistant Director - Strategic Commissioning attended the meeting to present the report and to answer members' questions

The report stated that the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

had written to all local authorities on 19 March 2020 outlining the financial support that would be made available to support the response to Covid-19 with regards to the provision of adult care services. In the time since the letter had been received the Council had been allocated two un-ringfenced grants totalling £16.2million that were to be used to support Adult Social Care and other Council services impacted by Covid-19. The report stated that the Secretary of State had specifically reminded local authorities for the need, and of their obligation to support the Adult care provider market in their local area

The Secretary of State's letter highlighted that the funding should be utilised to support specific activities surrounding supporting the adult social care sector. The report detailed the specific areas that then Secretary of State had highlighted as areas that should be targeted for support. These included:

- Helping providers deal with the costs of increased workforce pressures due to higher sickness absence caused by the outbreak
- Facilitating arrangements for adjusting packages as required in a timely and non-bureaucratic way, especially where providers are having to operate beyond normal services in order to respond to need.
- Helping providers to meet costs associated with enhanced infection control and the protection of staff.
- Finding supportive and creative ways to support providers in handling wider pressures caused by Covid-19.

The report provided information on the actions that were being proposed to enable the Council to respond to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 Pandemic on supporting people with a Learning Disability and/or Autism and to respond to the increase in financial demands from providers who supported people with these needs in the Borough. It was noted that after Older People's services this area of service provision represented the Adult Care Directorate's second largest area of spend, with a gross budget annual budget of approximately £31.6 million.

The report provided details of the challenges that the Covid-19 Pandemic had created for the delivery of support to those with a Learning Disability and/or Autism and information on the actions that were being proposed to deal with these in areas including:

- Day Opportunities and Direct Payments
- Residential Care and Supported Living
- Unpaid Carers and the Voluntary Sector

It was noted that introduction of social distancing measures had impacted severely the provision of services that supported residents with a Learning

Disability and/or Autism in that access to these support services had been greatly reduced or had ceased entirely. In the absence of formal support services, parent carers, many of whom were in vulnerable groups themselves in relation to the pandemic, had had to increase the level of daily support that they provided. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health advised that the proposed actions would not only support these services and unpaid carers during the pandemic but would also ensure their sustainability into the future.

The Cabinet Member advised that the proposed actions detailed at sections two and three of the officer's report had an estimated cost of £970,000 over a twelve-week period, and that support would be backdated to 1 April 2020. It was noted that in line with Local Government Association guidance, the Council would further support the cash flow of providers supporting people with a Learning Disability/Autism by making prompt weekly payments. It was noted that this proposed method of payment would support the cash flow of service providers and their ability to maintain their workforce.

It was also noted that the Council was also working on a fast track recruitment and training offer that would be able to support the independent/voluntary sector to recruit readymade applicants to supplement staff shortages as an alternative to agency staffing, and that this service would be known as the Rotherham Skills Academy.

The report provided details of the specific approach to payments that would support different types of service provision, noting that the proposed approach would enable differentiation between the different type of service provision to be made that would enable the different funding mechanisms for each service to be taken into account, either through commissioned services or through the use of Direct Payments.

The alternative options to deliver financial support to Learning Disability Day Opportunity Providers during the Covid-19 Pandemic that had been considered and the reasons for their rejection were detailed in the officer's report.

Members welcomed the proposals to financially support Learning Disability Day Opportunity Providers during the pandemic and asked for further information on how the amount of financial support for different services and providers had been established. The Assistant Director - Strategic Commissioning provided further information on how the levels of support for different aspects of service delivery and service providers had been arrived at. The Assistant Director advised that Speak Up, a not for profit organisation that provided a diverse range of support services in the sector had been particularly active in supporting people with a Learning Disability/Autism during the pandemic through innovative approaches to service delivery, and as such it was proposed to award them a grant of £20,000 from the Covid-19 budget to enable them to continue to support people with a Learning Disability and Autism who were lonely and socially

isolated as a result of social distancing measures and service closures.

The Cabinet Member advised that an online meeting had been arranged to take place with unpaid carers to help establish more clearly the help and support they would need during the pandemic, and that these discussions would help determine how financial support was further allocated. The Cabinet Member also noted that meetings with unpaid carers would continue on a regular basis in order to ensure that the Council's support remained focussed on the needs of carers and service users as the pandemic progressed.

Members sought assurance over the auditing processes involved in the allocation of funding to providers and were assured by the Assistant Director that robust audit procedures were in place.

Members sought further information on the support that would be offered by the Rotherham Skills Academy. The Assistant Director provided further information on the service and assured members that the service would be able to recruit the numbers of qualified staff that would be required. The Assistant Director noted that Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council had already set up such a service and that the Council would be using this as a benchmark for provision in Rotherham.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health and the Assistant Director - Strategic Commissioning for attending the meeting and answering members questions on the two reports that had been presented for consideration.

The Chair also advised that today was the last day at Rotherham for Assistant Chief Executive, Shokat Lal before he left to take up a new post at Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council. The Chair noted his thanks to Mr Lal for the support that he had provided to scrutiny during his time at Rotherham and wished him all the best in his new role.

Resolved: -

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.
2. That the thanks of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be conveyed to the outgoing Assistant Chief Executive, Shokat Lal, for his support the scrutiny function at Rotherham since 2016.

175. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.