

**GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**CARE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING**

**Tuesday, 29 October 2019**

**PRESENT:** Councillor S Green (Chair)

Councillor(s): M Charlton, W Dick, B Goldsworthy,  
M Goldsworthy, M Hood, R Mullen, I Patterson, J Wallace,  
A Wheeler, P McNally, J Lee, J Gibson, Diston and H Haran

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor(s): K Ferdinand, M Hall and K McClurey

**CHW151 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The Committee agreed the minutes of the last meeting, held on 10 September 2019 as a correct record.

**CHW152 HEALTHWATCH GATESHEAD**

Felicity Shenton, Operations Manager / Deputy Chief Executive and Kim Newton, Project Manager, Healthwatch Gateshead provided the Committee with an update on the range of work being carried out by Healthwatch Gateshead.

The Committee was advised that since Healthwatch Gateshead had presented its findings and recommendations on Continuing Healthcare (CHC) to the Committee contradictory information had been received at Healthwatch Gateshead regarding the funding of care under CHC. Information had been received which suggested that a policy was in place which restricts funding for care at home under CHC so that if a person requires more than eight hours care per day they would need to move to a nursing home. In light of this, the Committee was asked if it would request NewcastleGateshead CCG to provide the OSC with an update providing clarification on the position of funding for CHC funding at a future meeting.

The Committee considered that if the above was the case, it was a matter for concern given the major drive to support individuals in their homes for as long as possible. The Committee considered that it was important that clarification is received on this matter and supported the requested to seek further information from NewcastleGateshead CCG on this issue.

The Committee received information on the work Healthwatch Gateshead had carried out in relation to the impacts of reduced funding for adult social care in Gateshead and their recommendations for Adult Social Care.

The Director of Adult Social Care confirmed that there had been some really positive work between Healthwatch Gateshead and the Council in relation to this work and the issue around having the right people present when engaging about proposals had been accepted and addressed via a follow up event.

The Committee noted that there seems to have been a policy vacuum around the way forward for Adult Social Care for some time given the uncertainty arising from Brexit.

The Director of Adult Social Care confirmed that the LGA Green paper arose out of the delay in the government issuing a Green Paper on this matter and confirmed that the Council and NHS colleagues were continuing to lobby for a fair deal for social care. As yet, there is no sign of the government's Green Paper being issued.

The Committee noted Healthwatch Gateshead's comments in relation to individuals receiving S117 accommodation potentially facing financial difficulties and sought clarification as it was the Committee's understanding that individuals should not be charged.

The Director of Adult Social Care noted that the Committee was correct in their understanding of the current position. However, work is taking place to explore whether Gateshead should develop a policy for charging for S117 accommodation in the future and whether other Councils are also considering charging. Individuals in Gateshead who might be affected by such a potential change in Council policy had been invited to a meeting last year as part of the budget consultations. If such a policy is to be implemented in the future Cabinet would need to agree this.

The Committee noted the ongoing outreach and engagement work being progressed by Healthwatch Gateshead and highlighted that there may be gaps in engagement work in the west of the borough where individual members of the Committee may be able to assist in terms of providing contacts etc. Attempts had been made to share this information but no progress had been made. Felicity Shenton thanked the Committee for drawing this to her attention and advised that she would progress this matter.

RESOLVED            (i)     That the information be noted.  
                              (ii)     That Newcastle Gateshead CCG be requested to provide an update on Continuing Healthcare funding.

## **CHW153    REVIEW OF SUICIDE - EVERY LIFE MATTERS - EVIDENCE GATHERING**

The Committee received information on the results of an Audit of Suicide and injury and undetermined deaths in Gateshead for the 2018 calendar year as part of its second evidence gathering session for its 2019-20 Review of Suicide. The audit identified key themes from local data and identified risk factors and high-risk population groups for suicide in Gateshead.

The Committee was advised that the updated trend data shows a positive downward direction with the release of the 2016-18 figures in September 2019. Rates per 100,000 population are falling in the three categories; Persons, Males and Females since the 2014-16 reporting period. However, the evidence suggests that there is still a lot of work to be done around performance in relation to the risk factors of suicide, as described by PHE, to ensure that less residents feel that the only way out of their situation is to take their own life.

The Committee noted that Gateshead has lower than regional rates of suicide and similar rates to England.

The Committee was informed that a number of risk factors of suicide are known and include: social isolation, certain mental health issues; bereavement; loss of employment; substance misuse and deprivation.

The Committee also learned that the PHE Fingertips online suicide prevention tool collects data on a wide range of risk factors for suicide including the following:-

- Depression recorded prevalence (aged 18+)
- Estimated prevalence of common mental health disorders
- Estimated prevalence of opiate and / or crack cocaine use
- Long term health problem or disability (%of population)
- Children in the Youth Justice System
- Children in care and children leaving care
- People living alone
- Admission episodes for alcohol related conditions

The Committee learned that for all the above measures, Gateshead has higher numbers than national (England) and regional benchmark figures. There is therefore a need for engagement of a wide range of partners in helping to reduce the risks of individuals ending their own life.

The key themes emerging from the audit were that:-

- A high number of individuals died in their own home making preventative initiatives targeting those at high risk difficult.
- The most common cause of death was self -poisoning with the second most common being hanging (predominantly in their own home)

High risk population groups are Males (in line with national data) and being Single and this is linked to another high-risk population group which is those Living Alone. A further high-risk population group is people who are unemployed and having relationship/ family problems is seen as the biggest social risk factor.

The Committee also had regard to the evidence that suicide is the leading cause of death among young people aged 20-34 years in the UK and it is considerably higher in men, with around three times as many men dying as a result of suicide compared to women. It is the leading cause of death for men under 50 in the UK. Those at highest risk are men aged between 40 and 44 years who have a rate of 24.1 deaths

per 100,000 population.

The Committee also noted that the number of people who are confirmed to have died as a result of Suicide is only a fraction of the people who are classed to have died from Suicide and injury undetermined deaths in Gateshead. Only 6.4% of cases in Gateshead had a suicide verdict with 62% being classified as misadventure and a further 26 % having a narrative verdict.

Taking account of the profile of people who died from suicide/ undetermined deaths in Gateshead in 2018 it is considered there are opportunities for preventative interventions via partnership working across the health and social care system with a focus on the following areas:-

- People with existing evidence of risk i.e. Alcohol/Drug use, Self-Harmers and those who have had previous suicide attempts.
- Review of prescribing practices. With the high number of deaths being linked to drugs use there is scope to ensure that individuals only obtain and continue to receive drugs for personal use.
- Working with Drug and Alcohol services to ensure their staff know the increased risk in their client group and where possible to provide Mental Health support alongside the therapy for the physical addiction.
- Working with GP Practice staff to raise the opportunity for intervention as 29/47 visited their GP within the 3 months prior to death for physical issues.
- Working with providers of support for people with Depressive illness

The Committee was informed that suicide prevention work impacting on Gateshead is being taken forward at Regional, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear and Gateshead level and information on this would form the basis of future evidence sessions.

The Committee queried how many of the cases reviewed as part of the audit involved individuals receiving NHS input for mental health issues. The Committee was informed that only 20% cases had involvement from NHS secondary care with the majority of those identifying as having mental health issues seeking interventions via their GP and the majority having a diagnosis of depression. The Committee considered that this highlighted the need for further education on this issue.

The Committee noted that one of the risk factors was deprivation and queried whether the impact of universal credit was increasing the levels of deprivation and increasing the risk of suicide in deprived areas. It was also queried whether there was any evidence of patterns of increased suicides in areas of deprivation.

The Committee was advised that suicides in Gateshead had been plotted over the last three years and there was evidence of higher levels of suicide in areas with greater deprivation levels. It was also highlighted that work to tackle poverty is a key focus for the Council and it was hoped that this along with other initiatives would reduce numbers of suicides going forwards.

The Committee noted that accessing mental health services might not be a quick process and recent articles in the press had highlighted issues of significant numbers of individuals being kept on hidden waiting lists and individuals being

rushed through the system in order to meet targets. The Committee sought reassurances that this was not happening in Gateshead.

The Committee was informed that a response would be sought from Newcastle Gateshead CCG, as commissioners of these services, which would be fed into the review.

The Committee sought information on what families, suffering economic hardship, could do when family members committed suicide and insurance companies would not cover the cost of a funeral. The Committee was advised that applications can be made to the Council for a Council contracted funeral but generally these are only provided where there are no relatives who can fund a funeral and there is a set process which has to be followed.

RESOLVED                      That the Committee consider the information presented as part of the Review of Suicide.

#### **CHW154      SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19 & STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Committee considered the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) 2018/19 Annual Report which gave an overview of the SAB Structure, governance and scrutiny arrangements and performance information.

It was noted that key achievements of the SAB during 2018/19 included:

- Adult Sexual Exploitation practice guidance and implementation of the Adult Missing, Sexually Exploited and Trafficked group
- Development of a case file audit tool
- Successful joint Adverse Childhood Experiences conference with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and Public Health
- Delivery of bespoke training courses, including voluntary sector management trustees and resident groups
- Launch of Safeguarding in Gateshead website [www.gatesheadsafeguarding.gov.uk](http://www.gatesheadsafeguarding.gov.uk) and @Gatesheadsafes twitter account
- Development of the Gateshead Multi-Agency Adult Referral Team (MAART)
- Maintaining compliance with Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

The Committee was advised that future areas of focus for the SAB were set out in its Strategic Plan 2019/24 and had been developed following consultation with service users, key partners and providers and as a result of local and national Safeguarding Adult Reviews and other inquiries. It had been identified that the five strategic priorities in place since 2016 were still fit for purpose for 2019-24 and were as follows:-

- Quality Assurance
- Prevention
- Community Engagement and Communication

- Improved Operational Practice
- Implementing Mental Capacity Act / Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

The Committee noted that each priority area had a series of key actions the Board was committed to deliver against during the five-year period. The Strategic Plan was accompanied by an annual business plan to assist in prioritising workstreams and keep delivery on track.

The Committee noted that one of the key areas of work going forwards was in relation to adults with learning disabilities and developing resources to help identify what constitutes abuse. Improvements would also be progressed in relation to operational practice relating to missing adults and identifying when partners need to come together.

RESOLVED                      That the information be noted and thanks passed to Carole Paz-Uceira and Joe Lowrey for their work in supporting the SAB to achieve concrete outcomes during the period in question.

#### **CHW155    REVIEW OF WORK TO HELP PEOPLE STAY AT HOME SAFELY**

The Committee received a report providing an update on the progress being made in implementing the Committee's recommendations from its Review of Work to Help People Stay at Home Safely.

The Committee noted in particular that in relation to recommendation 2 a significant amount of work was taking place in relation to recruitment and retention including the development of an Adult Social Care recruitment strategy.

The Committee also noted that in relation to recommendation 3 planning permission has now been granted for an 82 unit extra care scheme in Lobley Hill with a proportion of units to be dementia specific.

RESOLVED                      (i)        That the information be noted.  
    (ii)        That the Committee receive a further progress update in six months' time.

#### **CHW156    NEW GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The Committee was advised that new statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny in local government and combined authorities had been published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government with the aim of raising the profile of scrutiny committees and increasing the effectiveness and relevance of their work.

The guidance focuses on the importance of a strong organisational

culture which supports scrutiny to provide effective challenge and a commitment to scrutiny across an authority and also focuses on a range of areas including resourcing, powers to access information and planning of work programmes etc. The guidance leaves scope for local practice and does not intend to be prescriptive.

Having reviewed the areas highlighted within the new guidance it is considered that Gateshead already has in place much of what is set out in the guidance. However, potential areas for improvement have been identified as follows:-

- Development of an enhanced Executive / Scrutiny Protocol (as set out in appendix 1 to the report) as a positive means of defining the relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny and providing a framework for managing / mitigating any differences of opinion/ highlighting scrutiny's powers to access information.
- Note a potential future role in relation to the wider implications of whistleblowing investigations
- Development of an Annual Report to Council on scrutiny's activities to raise awareness across the wider Council membership of ongoing work.
- Hold a Workshop to explore with councillors the potential role scrutiny can play in following the Council Pound and seek to prioritise the areas to be considered. The workshop to be open to all members of the Council at the request of the Chair of Corporate Resources OSC.

The Committee sought clarification on Cabinet member attendance at meetings of the OSC where an issue of concern was being considered. The OSC was informed that where the OSC was scheduled to consider an issue of concern they could request a Cabinet member to attend the meeting to participate in the discussion and share their views. This mechanism within the protocol had been used previously by another OSC and worked well.

The Committee indicated that when the issue of the Newcastle Gateshead CCG update on Continuing Healthcare Funding is scheduled within the work programme it would like to request the attendance of the Cabinet member at that meeting as this is an issue of concern for the OSC. The Committee was advised that this matter would be progressed.

The Committee expressed concern that the OSC and the Health and Wellbeing Board might be working in silos. The OSC was advised that as the OSC work programme includes six monthly updates on the work being progressed via the Health and Wellbeing Board there are opportunities for the OSC to seek further information on specific issues/ how the work of the two bodies can complement each other.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the information be noted.
- (ii) That the proposed areas for improvement be endorsed.

**CHW157 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received the provisional work programme for the municipal year 2019-20.

It was noted that the work programme was endorsed at the meeting on 23 April 2019 and councillors had agreed that further reports would be brought to future meetings to highlight current issues / identify any changes / additions to this programme.

Appendix 1 (appended to the main report) set out the work programme as it currently stood and highlighted proposed changes to the work programme.

The Committee requested that it be provided with a progress update on partnership work to tackle obesity in the borough, with a particular focus on work taking place via GP practices and schools, as part of the work programme.

- RESOLVED
- (i) That the information be noted.
  - (ii) That a progress update on partnership work to tackle obesity in the borough, with a particular focus on work taking place via GP practices, be included in the work programme
  - (iii) That further reports on the work programme be brought to Committee to identify any additional policy issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.

**Chair.....**