

Minutes of a meeting of the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee held remotely on Wednesday, 9 December 2020 at 4.30 pm

Commenced 4.30 pm

Concluded 6.50 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT GROUP	BRADFORD INDEPENDENT GROUP
Greenwood Mir Godwin Lintern Humphreys	Hargreaves	Griffiths	Khadim Hussain

Observers: Cllr S Ferriby, Portfolio Holder – Healthy People and Places;
Councillor Berry & Councillor Shaheen

Apologies: Councillors Goodall & J Sunderland

Councillor Greenwood in the Chair

43. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency Councillor Hargreaves disclosed that he was a Trustee of a Voluntary Community Sector organisation (Minute 47) The interest was not prejudicial and he remained in the meeting during discussion and voting on that item.

ACTION: City Solicitor

44. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2020 be signed as a correct record.

45. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

46. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals made to the Committee.

47. COVID-19: BRADFORD DISTRICT HEALTH AND WELLBEING VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR (VCS)

Representatives of the Bradford District Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Assembly attended the meeting to present a verbal report providing an overview on activity and experiences of the health and wellbeing voluntary and community sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, examples of work carried out during the pandemic and case studies were presented along with learning from this period and a look ahead to the future.

The case studies provided included examples of actions carried out by Bradford Trident; GATC; Girlington Community Kitchen, The Trident Centre; The Gateway, Greengates, mental health services under the banner Healthy Minds, CNET and The Khidmet Centre, Peer Talk, Jump @ Home, Keighley Healthy Living, Bridge Project and Dementia Friendly Keighley.

It was acknowledged that there were many more organisations carrying out invaluable work in communities which, due to time constraints, had not been reported.

A comprehensive presentation of the work of voluntary providers included, but was not limited to, the following services: -

- The provision of digital inclusion devices and tutoring for students.
- Support for isolated households
- Investment in IT in community centres
- Provision of a bike library to enable people to travel
- Mental health support including for bereavement, anxiety, depression and other mental illness
- The Mental Health Providers Forum, considering issues across the district, working together to provide collective support.
- Provision of mental health training to Neighbourhood Support staff to enable them to be able to recognise people who were struggling and promote available support
- Befriending services
- Crisis advice and sign posting to other services
- Food banks
- Provision of food and delivery of meals to people who were vulnerable, self-isolating or shielding
- Community kitchens catering for the needs of South Asian communities
- Children's play schemes and family sports
- Refugee support

Following a very comprehensive presentation it was acknowledged that those organisations had worked in partnership and across the district to support residents and that voluntary organisations had been the back bone of support to people throughout the District during the pandemic.

A Member, who was also a trustee of a voluntary organisation, referred to a number of small organisations, some of which were newly founded, which had stepped up and were now on the verge of being involved in the VCS assembly. He suggested that a strategy to help those organisations to continue to grow and maintain volunteers who had helped during the pandemic was required. The financial support to those organisations from smaller businesses was also discussed and it was suggested that measures to maintain financial support should also be considered. The mental health issues arising from the pandemic and the health benefits which could be gained from volunteering were also raised.

In response it was explained that a collaborative review of the VCS infrastructure which the Council and others invested in to support a strong and sustainable sector had been in progress for 18 months. Consultation had been undertaken and analysis of that consultation was being considered to test what people had said pre COVID in terms of what was needed for sector sustainability and question if that was still needed, question if there were new priorities and understand the support required and lessons learnt from the pandemic. Those conversations would pick up the points raised about mobilising volunteers in a different way to pre COVID and capture and build upon valuable developments.

A Member with personal experience of the COVID response work undertaken in Keighley referred to the invaluable support provided by many organisations and wanted to take the opportunity to name check a few of those involved and acknowledged that there were many more who could be commended. She referred to a number of people including Diane Dale from the Volunteer Centre, believing that the local response would not have been as effective if she hadn't kept everything co-ordinated; Vicky Beer and Project 6; Roshnigar; Highfield Centre; the Salvation Army and Diane Ryan from the Sue Belcher Centre who took the initiative to mobilise people at the time of need.

She felt that one theme which was not evident in the presentation was that people took an active role and did what was required prior to any national funding being available. Voluntary organisations had spoken to their funders who had given them the authority to do what was required and trusted them to understand and do what was necessary. It was felt that it had only been at crisis point when it was acknowledged that VCS organisations understood the needs of communities and were trusted to get on with addressing that need. It was suggested that, as potential commissioners, the Council should consider that capability and trust in future commissioning decisions.

The extensive content of the verbal presentation was discussed and a Member requested that a written report be provided to allow Members to accurately communicate the wide-ranging information provided and details of activities occurring in the District, to the people they represent. It was explained that the presentation could be circulated and notes would be provided in report format to Members in the New Year. It was also agreed that the report could include examples which time constraints had prevented being discussed at the meeting. A Member expressed the view that following years of cuts had the VCS not been available the Council may not have had the resources to address issues arising from lockdown. He wanted to understand what had been learnt from the two lockdowns in light of warnings about future pandemics. He was concerned that

considering what had been learnt about re-building communities and supporting the vulnerable could be lost. Whilst preparing for what may come in the future it was stressed that the gap areas which fell between the major providers and smaller organisations be considered. He referred to activities at a large VCS organisation where he worked which had adapted to support smaller organisations and maintained that befriending and support could be facilitated without a smaller body being taken over.

Digital inclusion in marginal communities was raised and Members concerns about the standing down of health visitor services and the experiences of digitally excluded families through difficult lock down periods were discussed. It was suggested that the Committee also consider the remodelling of maternity pathway services in light of the impressive response of the VCS and the evidence that had it not been for that sector a lot of people would have been left alone.

A Member referred to VCS organisations which it was felt had been worked to the bone and expressed concern that, without a guaranteed level of support, those services could not continue. It was suggested that all that had been learnt from the VCS response to the pandemic should be mapped so services at risk could be identified and appropriate actions undertaken to ensure that those anchor organisations which the District had relied upon were not lost through lack of consideration or future support.

In response it was reported that one of things which had come out of sustainability work undertaken, approved and implemented live on the website was that grant and contract recipients in the VCS whose grant was new or due to end before the end of June 2021 could apply for an extension or change of output.

A representative of Girdlington Community Centre, Rubina Burha, wanted assurances that local community grass root services were protected. She also explained that her organisation, dealing with the BAME and Eastern European communities, was trying to develop digital services but it was felt it could be some considerable time before this could be implemented. It was requested that it be acknowledged that a large part of the community did not have access or the skills to take advantage of digital services to access Universal Credit or other local or national services. It was requested that this was taken into account when services were planned.

The financial health of the VCS was questioned and Members wished to know how many services had ceased and the amount of people who were furloughed or had lost their jobs through redundancy. It was explained that some of that information was in the survey results which would be shared with Members, however, some organisations had not provided that information. Organisations which had been advised to lease or buy property had been hardest hit and smaller organisations had incurred cash flow problems.

A Member explained that, whilst the public would be unaware, there had been pandemic plans in place at local hospitals for a number of years. The problem was that many of the structures to cope with such issues had been removed in the NHS reorganisation in 2010 which disbanded the Regional Health Authority. It was felt that the reinstatement of regional bodies was necessary as not all

responses to regional events could be delivered from Whitehall. It was stressed that the difficulties experienced with PPE procurement and testing would have been much better handled locally. It was explained that hospitals and the Council had followed pre prepared plans and that was why things had worked effectively.

In response it was explained that it was obvious at Gold Command meetings that Council officers, not through want of trying, did not have the infrastructure in place to be able to mobilise. The erosion of community development and some of equality work within the local authority was highlighted and was why the Neighbourhood Teams had to rely on VCS. Whilst the VCS were willing to address those needs it did expose a gap in terms of internal resourcing and equalities.

Resolved –

That the Committee commends and expresses its appreciation for the work of the VCS across Bradford District during the Covid-19 pandemic.

ACTION: Not applicable

48. RE-OPENING OF BUILDINGS-BASED SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES (DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC)

The report of the Strategic Director, Health and Wellbeing (**Document “P”**) updated and informed Members of the progression of plans to reopen building based commissioned Day Services for people with a Learning Disability (LD).

Members were advised that during the suspension of services providers had been asked to explore ways in which staffing resources could be re-allocated to provide alternative methods of supporting people in their own homes and outside. A number of providers had offered remote support to users and their families and carers via telephone and social media.

Commissioners had worked with VCS providers in Bradford to contribute to 300 state of the art tablets and internet dongles and they had been delivered across the District to locked down people who otherwise had no way of communicating with the outside world.

Video footage depicting a number of activities undertaken by The Big Soup Theatre Group was presented and included flash mobs, art pack deliveries and sessions, face mask production/delivery and safety videos. The footage showed the appreciation of service users and the valuable way they involved people and communicated essential measures. The footage showed a sample of events occurring throughout the District and the joy on the faces of service users involved was acknowledged and welcomed.

Members thanked the providers for the activities taking place believing that they were a lifeline for some people. It was suggested that a further report be provided and that services to people with learning disabilities should be prioritised as highly as education. It was also believed that service users be given a higher priority for the vaccination to enable them to return to activities and it was agreed that

investigations would be conducted into the priority designation for learning disabled people to receive vaccination and if their priority could be influenced.

Members requested they receive the link to the presentation and additional content which time constraints had meant it had not been possible to show and it was agreed to provide a link to that footage.

Measures to support the re-opening of building based day opportunities were questioned and surveys which had been conducted to understand service user experience of lockdown and to provide information on the demand for services and the types of activities required for the future were reported. It was acknowledged that social distancing measures meant that only a limited number of places were available in buildings at the current time and it was questioned how service users would be selected to return to that provision. In response it was explained that the Commissioning Unit with support from the infection control team had approved as COVID secure the building based Risk Assessments relating to twelve units delivered by seven different providers. Social Workers, CCG colleagues and Providers had identified those service users at greatest need in relation to a return to a building based service. Details of that assessment were contained in Document "P".

Resolved –

- (1) That every consideration be given to prioritising people with Learning Disabilities as part of the local Covid-19 vaccination programme so that service users are able to access vital buildings-based day services at the earliest possible opportunity**
- (2) That a further update be presented as part of a wider report on day services before the end of the municipal year.**

ACTION: Strategic Director, Health and Wellbeing

49. HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The Overview and Scrutiny Lead presented **Document "Q"** which reported the Committee's Work Programme 2020/21.

A Member who was also a Member of the Outbreak Management Committee believed there was some useful information from that group which would be helpful to Members and agreed to check if he was able to share that information with the Committee and provide a verbal update in the New Year.

It was also agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Lead be requested to write to the Executive to champion the cause of the Voluntary Community Sector and their efforts to support vulnerable people.

Resolved –

That the Work Programme 2020/21 continues to be regularly reviewed and updated on a rolling three month basis up to March 2021.

ACTION: Overview and Scrutiny Lead

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

THIS AGENDA AND ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER