

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE		
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care) – 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2025		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Ian Moncur	Adult Social Care	October-December 2024

## Introduction

As usual during the winter period, this time of year is busy for Adult Social Care; there is increased pressure on our hospitals and a need to discharge people quickly and safely, as well as a continued need to support people to remain well at home. Sefton Adult Social Care have worked hard to the bolster their services and integrate with health at the interface with the Hospitals, in preparation for the Winter challenges, and a presentation regarding the joint working and the impact of the Care transfer Hubs is due at the February Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. Teams will be working during the Christmas period to ensure support is available to those within the community and those being discharged from hospital.

## Preparation for Care Quality Commission Assurance and Assessment

Adult Social Care have now received their notification for their onsite assurance visit. CCQ will be onsite anytime from the 27<sup>th</sup> January to the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The service is fully focused on the preparation for the onsite visit including the pre-visit session with the Executive Director for Adult Social Care in early January 2024. I am also due to meet with CQC along with the Chief Executive and Chair of Overview and Scrutiny. During their onsite visit, the inspectors will meet with a range of front-line staff, people, and carers with lived experience. Corporate colleagues from across the Council are supporting the preparation, as are key partner organisations.

After their visit, CQC will meet with the Executive Director for Adult Social Care and Health on 4th February to provide initial feedback. Following assessment, CQC will produce a draft report. This will include scores for all the quality statements and an overall rating. As well as undergoing internal quality assurance, CQC will send Sefton a copy to check it is factually accurate.

For a period during initial formal assessments, CQC also undertake an internal benchmarking exercise to review and calibrate the scores and ratings. This is to ensure consistency across local authorities. As this will be carried out across small batches of assessments, there may be a short delay before publication of our final report. We expect our final report to be available within 5 months of the date of the visit.

## Better at Home Transformation Programme

The Better at Home transformation programme continues at pace. Although in total it is a three-year transformation for Adult Social Care and Health, designed to support people to stay at home for longer with appropriate support and reduce the need for residential care, Adult Social Care is already seeing the benefits. Significantly, as we enter the Winter period, Sefton ASC are supporting more people to return home after a period in hospital rather than move into a residential or nursing placement.

## **Urgent Care and Improving Access to Adult Social Care**

Work to review and improve how people first access support from the service has been progressing, and this programme of transformation is being developed with staff and individuals with lived experience. Following feedback, the name and remit of the existing triage team will be changed to the “First Contact Team.” Additional staff have been recruited to resolve more requests for support at the first point of contact, rather than needing to refer on to another team. As part of this approach, the service is also working closely with colleagues in the corporate Contact Centre to take live calls directly, which means people won’t need to wait for a call back. This is planned for March 2025.

## **Quality Assurance of Adult Social Care Practice**

Work continues with Partners for Change and three innovation sites, with a further two innovation sites in January 2025 to embed the three conversations model and improve the experience of people accessing the service. Over the last 3 months the service has focused on the refresh of the Adult Social Care Audit programme to support the collating of the 50 cases for CQC. The Senior Manager for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding has recently held staff workshops and individual team sessions for 250 staff to date, focusing on CQC preparation and practice.

## **Workforce**

A key enabler, if not the most pivotal to any of the Sefton ASC transformation programmes is the workforce, both the recruitment and retention of staff in what is clearly a challenging local and national social care market. Sefton ASC have developed a coproduced Workforce Offer and a Delivery Plan to assist in the recruitment and retention of staff. Reducing sickness and promoting wellbeing is also a key area of focus. Over the past 12 months the corporate performance information demonstrated that ASC turnover is relatively low, especially against other LA’s Adult Social Care departments. In addition, Sefton ASC have recently recruited permanently to a number of positions in both our hospital Social Work teams and the front door. Regardless, there is still a continued need to improve staff numbers and reduce the use of agency staff, and a wider piece of work reviewing the capacity and demand across the whole service has recently been undertaken to support future workforce planning. Adult Social Care has recently recruited a new Assistant Director for Commissioning who will commence in post in early 2025.

## **Occupational Therapy Practice and development**

As Occupational Therapy (OT) practice continues to evolve in Sefton, the 3 Conversations Model plays a pivotal role in the delivery of person-centred care, enhancing outcomes and strengthening the relationship between therapists and the people they are working with. Occupational Therapists play a crucial role in supporting individuals to achieve independence and improve their quality of life, yet the demand for these services continues to rise, while the supply of qualified OT professionals nationally remains limited.

Sefton counteracted the trend, and after a successful recruitment drive earlier this

year, the OT Team has increased capacity; this includes 3 people undertaking the OT apprenticeship degree at Sheffield Hallam University. The new year welcomes new staff, and the return of staff will bring the team to full capacity. It is therefore key that investment in the recruitment and retention of OTs in Sefton is essential to the success of ASC transformation. Ensuring early access to occupational therapy support will be a key part of the “Adult Social Care” transformation programme.

## **Strategic Commissioning**

### **New Directions**

Work with Sefton New Directions is continuing with a focus on the joint transformation work and how New Directions can support the delivery of the Better at Home programme, such as through their Reablement service and Chase Heys care home. A report has been approved by Cabinet in December which gave an update on the transformation work and the company’s budget position.

### **Domiciliary Care & Reablement**

We continue to experience an improved position in Domiciliary Care with around 11 people awaiting commencement of a package of care as at early December, and average waiting times of 2-3 days. We have also expanded block-booking arrangements to ensure there is dedicated capacity to support Hospital discharges.

Demand for reablement services has increased significantly over the past 2 years. The total number of people going through reablement in the last 12 months is 43% higher than in 2022, with 550 people accessing services. The vast majority of this increase in demand (78%), has been met by the expansion of alternative to reablement provision, which has been provided by domiciliary care agencies, however this can be costly and not always deliver consistent “reablement” outcomes.

A deep dive to identify the long-term requirements for reablement services has been carried out and a detailed plan of action developed. Work is ongoing to commence a procurement exercise to commission additional provision and this is expected to be in place by March 2025.

### **Care Homes and Quality**

The service is working with health teams to support care home improvements and is continuing to conduct compliance visits to care homes, working jointly with the Safeguarding Team and meeting with wider partners such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC), through the Care Quality & Risk meetings where intelligence on care homes is shared. The Quality Assurance (QA) team have a risk stratification model in place for all providers. Currently the QA Teams are working with 15-20 care providers which have been identified as having quality concerns, although risk is a dynamic variable and QA team aims to be as responsive as needed, so this figure can vary dependent on demands/concerns. The team works in partnership with social workers, therapists and health partners to provide additional support to providers and ensure risks are managed and addressed. From January 2025, Healthwatch colleagues will also be supporting with visits across the care market as part of the “Enter and View” programme.

Work continues between Safeguarding and Quality Assurance teams to develop the Organisational Safeguarding model. A process flow chart is being developed to provide a visual representation of the decision-making process.

### **2025/26 Fee Setting**

Work is taking place on formulating proposals for fee consultations for 2025/26 rates, which considers factors such as wage increases and National Insurance changes.

It is envisaged that consultation with Providers will commence early in the New Year.

### **Carers Strategy**

Using the building blocks of previous strategies, carers from across the borough, system partners and Sefton Council have come together to coproduce our new Carers Strategy 2025 – 2028. Carers developed the vision, and the strategy's six themes emerged through talking and listening. This strategy closely aligns with national and local policy drivers and has early intervention and prevention at its heart. It is intended for carers of all ages and sets out what we will do together to improve their health and well-being. The strategy and implementation plan also seeks to address feedback from carers received from the biannual carers survey.

In Sefton, we value the work that carers do and want to ensure they have the support they need for themselves and their caring role. This strategy and accompanying action plan commit to identifying carers early in their caring journey and recognise that seldom-heard groups may encounter barriers that impact their access to care and support. The Carers Strategy seeks to ensure fair access to care and support and to address any barriers that may have been identified.

The process of consultation and engagement in relation to the development of the Carers Strategy was previously presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2024 for consideration and comment. The finalised strategy and implementation plan will be re-presented to the Committee, made available to all Members and published on the Sefton Council website.

### **Early Intervention & Prevention Strategy**

The role of Adult Social Care has evolved over the past two decades. While it was acceptable to focus on people with the highest level of needs, this is no longer the case.

Among statutory remits are promoting social inclusion and well-being and developing sustainable services that promote independence and minimise the need for more intensive services. The Care Act 2014 helped to broaden the role of adult social care with respect to well-being, bringing considerations of early intervention and prevention into sharp focus.

It is recognised that to deliver excellent adult social care, early intervention and prevention needs to be at the heart of our approach. There are several reasons for this:

- Focusing on early intervention and prevention achieves better outcomes for the individuals concerned their carers and their families.
- Most people want to continue living at home. They want to be independent, make decisions, and be in close touch with family, friends, and communities.

- By intervening early, we work with individuals to prevent them from experiencing a crisis and needing long-term care.

A wider partnership approach is key, and colleagues from across a range of community and voluntary organisations recently held a workshop with people and carers who have experience of services. The purpose of the workshop was to:

1. Share some local examples of best practice in action
2. Coproduce a local definition of what early intervention and prevention means to people in Sefton
3. Consider what a 'Good Life' looks like and what needs to be present to achieve it
4. Consider feedback from the biannual carers and annual service user surveys
5. Identify high-level key priorities for the next two years.

The information gleaned through the session will guide the development of a draft Early Intervention & Prevention Strategy 2025 - 2028, which will be shared with the group to ensure that it reflects the voices heard on the day, with further dedicated work planned for January 2025 onwards. A full update and presentation on the strategy will be provided to the Committee in due course.

### **Adult Social Care Budget**

The budget forecast for 2024/25 indicated a potential deficit of £5.352M for the year, based on expenditure as at the end of October and on current activity levels continuing for the remainder of the year. The most significant risk remains the costs of placements and packages of care, although there are pressures in other areas also. As would be expected due to the size of the budget and the inherent risks, updates are reported monthly to ASC senior managers and to the Cabinet Member.

The Council's overall Budget Monitoring report due to be presented to Cabinet in December reports the forecast outturn overspend of £2.254m. However, it should be noted that there are a number of significant assumptions and uncertainties that could impact on the position before the year-end, including the achievement of a significant savings programme and additional mitigations.

### **Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and MP Enquiries**

In October and November 2024, ASC received twenty-five compliments highlighting the compassion, knowledge and professionalism of the Adult Social Care service. We received fourteen complaints and sixteen Elected Member enquiries.

At the time of writing the report, seven of the complaints received were responded to within the expected timescale, with five complaints received remaining open but within the timescale. 100% of the Elected Member enquiries were responded to within the expected ten-day timescale during this period.

In respect of the complaints received, those raised related to the following areas/themes: decision making (4), fees and charges (1), Human Resource Issues (2), and the quality-of-service Provision (7).

Five complaints were upheld or partially upheld; three complaints were not upheld; one was resolved upon receipt and five remain under investigation. Complaints partly upheld included a complaint about delays in discharge from hospital, and communication when transitioning from Children's Services to Adult Social Care, with direct payments.

All complaints are reviewed by the senior leadership team within Adult Social Care so learning and improvements can be taken forward across practice, process, and care provision. Learning is shared with practitioners across a number of forums within ASC and where required directly with providers. Listen and Learn notifications are shared across the Service with specific themes for learning.

