

Scrutiny Report

Quality Assurance of Care and Nursing Homes in Worcestershire

Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Services

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Task Group's report seeking reassurance about the effectiveness of the County Council's quality assurance systems of residential care and nursing homes. We would also want to thank the members of the Group for the work undertaken with a view to understanding the views of Providers and other key partners.

The terms of reference for the scrutiny exercise were 'to investigate how the Council carries out and monitors quality assurance of care homes in Worcestershire'.

We will respond to each of the recommendations in turn:

Clarity and communication of findings to the public

We are very aware of the national pressures in relation to the recruitment and retention of workforce and are working with regional colleagues to develop new ways of working. We have recently secured national funding to support Nursing Associates in Care Homes and hope this will support the development of a career pathway for care within the private sector.

We are very aware of the issues related to the funding levels available from the Council. We have an annual negotiation with all care providers to ensure we use available resources to best effect but clearly a national funding solution is urgently required to address the need to provide appropriate funding.

As requested the Quality Assurance Team and Lead Commissioner for Care Homes will ensure that a full update is provided to Scrutiny in July 2020 on the progress to mitigate the issues affecting the care market.

Assistive Technology

Recommendation 3: The Council should intensify development in the use of assistive technology for residents living in their own homes to assist them to stay independent for longer. We also encourage increased use of assistive technology in care and nursing homes to improve residents' experience.

Response

We were pleased that the Task Group recognises the importance of the use of assistive technology. Adult Services will be pleased to update Scrutiny on the progress and the significant range of projects underway which are keeping people independent for longer.

We appreciate that members have recognised the high proportion of people in care and nursing homes compared to our family group of authorities but would want to clarify that this is due to the high level of Hospital Acquired Functional Decline experienced by our older residents following an admission to hospital. This is indeed having a significant impact on the Adult Social Care budget. We would be happy to brief members on this matter.

Positive Intervention when a home closes suddenly

Recommendation 4: We recommend that the Council documents and communicates its 'crisis response policy' to all stakeholders and care homes.

Response

As confirmed the Adult Services Provider function has a service which does provide a service of last resort if appropriate. This has been in place for many years and will provide an intervention if appropriate. However there are circumstances in which such an intervention is not appropriate once an assessment has been undertaken.

All Providers are regularly asked to update their emergency response plans and we are keen to ensure that we are clear with Providers that they should adhere to the notice period stated in their contract.

Recommendation 5: We recommend greater consistency of access to forums and networks for care and nursing homes, and that this includes events with outside speakers if relevant.

Response

Whilst we support the recommendation it has been the experience of Council staff that only a small number of Providers attend meetings when they are arranged.