

WMADASS  
Shire Hall  
Abbey Foregate  
Shrewsbury  
Shropshire SY2 6ND

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Elaine Carolan (Interim DASS),  
Worcestershire Council

Dear Elaine,

### **Worcestershire Council Adult Social Care Peer Challenge February 2020**

I write to give you formal feedback following the peer challenge that was recently undertaken. This builds on the provisional feedback that was shared with you and the wider team on the 7th Feb 2020. (A copy of the final presentation and the practice review is attached as an appendix).

Whilst I led the peer challenge team as the Lead Director, I was also joined by colleagues, Owen Cave Expert by Experience and Chair of Worcestershire Autism Board, Julie Smith Telford and Wrekin Council, Kerrie Allward Walsall Council, and Paulette Hamilton Cabinet lead for health and wellbeing Birmingham City Council.

On behalf of the rest of the team and West Midlands ADASS I would like to express thanks to Owen for his contributions, but also to Worcestershire for enabling him to join the team. His enthusiasm, insight and the level of focus on the key lines of enquiry was of great value whilst we were on site. Going forward he is committed to supporting Worcestershire on further developing its adult social care vision and delivery of sustainable and integrated services, we hope his participation in the peer challenge will help with agreeing that vision.

The process also included a practice review, that was led by Mark Godfrey who supports the Principal Social Worker (PSW) network, and included PSW's from two other councils, and your own PSW. The practice review as we discussed identified some areas of practice that require further exploration by the council to assure itself that the current practice and pathways consistently demonstrate compliance with legislation applicable to adult social care, accepted good practice in case recording, and reflect the strengths-based practice ethos the council is committed too.

The peer challenge team would like to acknowledge the work that was put in ahead of the visit by the directorate leadership team, in defining the scope of the programme, preparing the evidence and making sure when the team was on site that the whole process ran smoothly. This was particularly appreciated by the team, given the recent changes in leadership and structure within the organisation and the directorate. It demonstrated how much commitment there is within the directorate at all levels and also the wider council to make sure adult social care within Worcestershire delivers effective and sustainable services to local residents. The team was also very grateful for the contributions of partners, people who use services and the different stakeholders that offered their contributions to the whole process, their inputs were very valuable in developing what we hope was feedback that enables the council to move forward.

You asked for the peer challenge team to explore three specific areas:

1. Is there a collective understanding, across the County Council and partners of the profile of spend and demand pressures we face from increasing complexity and demand from people with Learning Disabilities and Autism?
2. Is our current model for service delivery and support for people with Learning Disabilities and Autism fit for purpose and affordable?
3. What opportunities do we have to work in partnership to co-produce a sustainable model for delivery?

This letter provides a summary of our findings and recommendations. The feedback presentation given on the 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020 and the practice review final report are also attached as appendices.

The team were very impressed with the strong vision for Worcestershire as a place, and how Worcestershire has delivered already on promoting economic prosperity and creating an environment and infrastructure that makes it an attractive place to live, work and play. You have many vibrant communities, and your infrastructure work will enhance these, making it easy for local people to know what is happening in their local area, will also have a benefit for health and social care and is an opportunity to build on one of your assets to manage demand.

The council has made a significant financial commitment to adult social care recently, but the peer challenge team were not able to conclude that the opportunity this presents will be maximised without a clear adult social care vision and delivery plan in place. This vision is the people equivalent of the aspirations for place that you already have. Every level of the organisation needs to own this vision, be clear about their contribution to its delivery including political leaders. A clear strategic vision for social care, will make it much easier for partners, particularly health partners, but also your district council partners to work with you to develop and implement an integrated health and social care vision. This is key to improving outcomes for people but also managing the financial pressures on the council due to rising demand from children and adults social care.

While you have good working relationships with health partners, integration and system discussions do not appear to have matured in line with the national policy agenda and this is putting more pressure on the social care system. The integration work needs prioritising and the views of people who use services need to help shape and reset the future system delivery plan. Across the health and care system some good examples exist of highly effective programmes of work such as Transforming Care which has required a significant level of partnership working at a practice and commissioning level so you do know what is possible to achieve when you work well as a system.

This year's financial pressures in adult social care are showing that opportunities for managing spend effectively are already potentially not being taken and this includes the management of demand. The additional financial investment that has been injected into the adult social care spend needs to be effectively monitored to ensure that changes in practice, and innovation such as the use of technology are delivering a return on investment and improving outcomes. Otherwise spend will continue to rise particularly in the learning disability pathway, where there is opportunity for improvements already identified by the council as young people move into adult social care. The work that has already started in this area through commissioning, is clearly supported by the children's leadership team and should be built on at pace and include health, education and adult social care operations in the design of a new model.

The practice review was undertaken prior to us arriving on site, examined only a limited number of cases in the learning disability team, and the PSW's met with only a small sample of staff. However, the peer challenge team did hear and see other evidence during the onsite visit that suggested that the lack of overall vision for adult social care is starting to have a real impact on practice and the council should seek further assurance that it is consistently meeting its statutory responsibilities across all client groups and pathways. The peer challenge team would suggest that any review should start with the safeguarding adult's pathway, and the West Midlands ADASS Improvement Director is offering to support Worcestershire in undertaking this work with some urgency. We know that you have already started to discuss the issues identified and ensuring that the strengths based model you have put in place is consistently applied. Workforce pressures in health and social care are a national issue, and many areas are starting to tackle this through having an integrated workforce strategy that addresses the issues for the directly employed staff, but also helps the wider voluntary and independent sector. Developing this system workforce strategy should be pursued with some urgency to address supply but also morale and succession planning for the longer term.

The identification of the key lines of enquiry, and all of the conversations we had on site demonstrated that you have already started to use the many sources of data you and your partners have, but you do need to now move into a conversation that starts to build a collective understanding of what the data is telling you, and then what you as a system are going to do to improve. You clearly have done this in the Transforming Care area of work, but you need to do this from an all age, life course perspective, across all client groups, agree what hasn't worked well in the past and have a single view on measuring progress going forward. This will ensure that single agency actions are also not inadvertently having a negative impact on another part of the system.

Whilst a significant amount of data exists within the directorate, it was not always apparent that everyone had a shared understanding of the cost, spend and income pressures and opportunities. Despite receiving additional investment this financial year, an overspend is still predicted and rapid progress might be possible in areas such as the efficiency of the in-house provision, improving the income position, and ensuring care purchased is focused on enablement and independence if supported by delivery plans that are owned and monitored by the management team. The new case system is still settling in, but clarity about ownership and accountability of budgets needs to be established alongside this within operational teams, so front line managers can manage spend effectively.

The commissioning activity as young people move into adult social care is really starting to show some encouraging signs, however, to make this truly effective, it needs to be located in a life course approach. An integrated pathway and services with partners that have a strong prevention and early intervention ethos, utilises some of the vibrant local social capital, and includes clear information and advice services that are responsive to all levels of need including those who have multiple and complex needs of all ages will manage demand and improve outcomes. Public health, children's, health and education partners will be key to designing and delivering this pathway which is required to produce a sustainable model for the future. In some areas, for example domiciliary care and nursing and residential care it may be worth discussing with partners if early wins might be achieved by agreeing joint or lead commissioning models to shape the market and be able to respond to integrated care more effectively. You have achieved significant success in Transforming Care, and closer working in other areas may well help replicate that success.

In summary the team identified six key areas for future focus that the council may want to consider going forward which are set out below:

- Create a compelling vision for adult social care – and as part of that develop a life course strategy with partners.
- Senior leaders need to work together to drive the vision forward.
- Re-build and re-set the relationship at a system level and consider what governance you need to have in place for future integrated working.
- Whatever arrangements you agree on, ensure they drive forward at pace.
- Get a grip of your money in the short term.
- Build up from the local place and partners.

It was clear from everyone we met, that there is a significant amount of loyalty to Worcestershire County Council as an organisation, and to the local place. This gives you a very strong position to build from and needs harnessing to help make progress rapidly and build a positive culture and focus on delivery at every level of the organisation and in relationships with partners. The new senior leadership focus from the chief executive and the emergence of a refreshed executive team, with a newly appointed director of adult social care is a great opportunity to re-set your work and partnerships. We met many people who demonstrated great enthusiasm and commitment to continuing to deliver, and a refreshed approach will build on this energy and improve outcomes further.

In line with the West Midlands peer challenge approach, we would ask that the council considers the areas of future focus, develops an action plan in response and in six months review progress with myself and the West Midlands ADASS Improvement Director Pete Jackson. It is also agreed in the West Midlands that councils will publish their peer challenge final letter and subsequent action plan to demonstrate its commitment to sector led improvement.

We hope that you regard the feedback from the peer challenge team as being constructive and helpful. We have learnt from the process ourselves and we have really appreciated the opportunity to take away some of the exemplar work you are doing in the areas of Transforming Care, and with your permission share it across the West Midlands. On behalf of the peer challenge team, I would like to thank you for hosting this peer challenge and for working so positively with us. If you have any points that you would like clarifying, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Betts', written in a cursive style.

**Professor Graeme Betts (DASS, Birmingham)**

Cc Pete Jackson, Helen Coombes, Shelley Madley, Paul Robinson (CEX Worcestershire)

Cc Peer Challenge Team