

ESCC PARISH REPORT – OCTOBER 2021, CLLR BOB BOWDLER

Adult Social Care:

The big unknown is the impact of Build Back Better and the Government's funding reform for ASC. We are awaiting the detail but we anticipate having to undertake many more social care and financial assessments and putting in new systems to monitor people's spend against the lifetime care cap.

We are now restoring our services and catching up on the backlog of work and managing the demand that has been held back through COVID. Linked to this the NHS is under significant pressure and has been at OPEL4 (highest escalation) for several weeks now – which is unusual for this time of year.

- COVID is a factor but not major – with an average of 30–40 beds occupied with COVID patients at any one time.
- A&E attendances are exceptionally high – a mixture of pent up demand and lack of access to Primary Care – and A&E performance is consistently below the 4 hour standard.
- The situation is not helped by the increased numbers of patients Medically Ready for Discharge caused in part by the lack of available homecare.
- The care market is extremely fragile and our biggest concern (as it impacts on everything we do).
- Care homes are anticipating the impact of losing staff as a result of mandatory vaccinations (7% of the workforce has not been vaccinated) – this will affect our ability to make placements.
- Homecare is at maximum capacity (effectively one out, one in) and we are supporting providers to undertake rapid overseas recruitment to boost the number of hours available.

Public Health

Ongoing COVID work, re information and advice, outbreak management, test and trace, vaccinations and more. Also restoring commissioned services that were suspended or reduced as a result of COVID.

Community Safety

- We are implementing the new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act.
- There is also ongoing activity in respect of Project Adder in Hastings.

Integration

- Working with the NHS to develop the new ICS (Integrated Care System) in time for April 2022.
- The focus of the Council is on developing a Memorandum of Understanding that describes how we participate in and influence the ICS without being accountable for or to the NHS.
- From a provider perspective we are discussing with ESHT the next stage of our integration journey – although it could be difficult for them to move much further on this until the ICS has bedded down.

Climate Change

In October 2019 East Sussex County Council declared a Climate Emergency and since then has achieved year on year reduction in Carbon emissions and with other responsible bodies, addressed a range of environmental and ecological challenges. We recognise that without more significant and sustained action, the world is set to exceed the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit between 2030 and 2040 the consequences of which are set out in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report published in October 2018.

Given our commitment to net zero and our action on climate change we recognise the intent of The Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill (published as the Climate and Ecology Bill) to ensure the UK sets out its fair and proper role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in an accountable and ecologically responsible manner.

In the context of the Government's commitment to environmental protection and this Authority's determination to enhance ecology and improve the environment, ESCC supports the principles of the Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill, and we will express our support for these principles as it makes its passage through the legislative process.

Home to School Transport

The fuel and driver shortage has caused problems and with one contractor in particular. Officers are keeping a close watch on the situation which hopefully will ease with additional fuel delivery drivers and additional HGV and PSV drivers coming through the system.

Secondary School Places

Reminder that parents of children in year 6 going to secondary school in September 2022 need to complete their application by the 31st of October.

Skills

The upskilling of the East Sussex workforce is essential if we are to get the economy growing. There are a number of schemes to encourage residents, especially the young, but also for all ages. A lot of the effort seems concentrated on the coast, which is in some ways understandable given population densities and location of colleges. However, we must not ignore the more rural areas of the County.

Covid

There has been some media comment on the rise in covid cases in schools. Whilst this is probably inevitable given the greater interaction in schools and generally, it would appear we may need to learn to live with Covid.

Children & Families

I visited Lansdown Secure Unit to view latest update of 5 additional spaces, plus the refurbishment of the original 7 units. We still await final sign off for the build, when we will then be able to fill the unit to capacity, which will be before the end of the year. Some extremely valuable work goes on here! We should all be extremely proud of our facilities, our staff, and what this authority can regularly achieve:

This week, accompanied by our new DCS, I also visited our social workers in Hastings and Eastbourne, which was my first opportunity to meet the staff face to face. Case loads remain high, which is unsurprising in the circumstances. All appeared to be extremely positive with only minor (resolvable) niggles! It was good to see NHS/CCG and Police staff working closely with our 'Multi-Agency' teams.

The department continues to take its fair share of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (up to the age of 18) from the National Transfer Scheme, on a voluntary basis. The current number of under 18s in our care is 56. We also have one individual currently housed in a hotel who reports to being 17, however we believe he is actually an adult and is presently being reviewed.

We have a total of 618 Looked After Children (LAC) in our care. Wherever possible councillors should get to know what facilities the council provides in YOUR area, and where you are able, get to know the staff and offer whatever support you can. These are children who need help, support, guidance, mentors and role models, 'it could be you'!

All our social care staff and foster carers have been informed how to register for Ofsted booster vaccinations should they want one.

The fuel shortage has caused some issues in a small number of cases. There has been a requirement to Risk Assess home visits, with some families having had to revert to virtual support.

Finally, we have been notified that we have been successful in two regional funding bids. One is in the 'Foundations Service', which deals in pre-birth work, the other being work alongside Portsmouth, Kent and Oxfordshire in establishing 'Lifelong Links' and 'Network Support' for children in our care.