

Health Policy and Performance Board

Annual Report

April 2023 - March 2024



I have been a member of the Health Policy and Performance Board since 2018, but I am very pleased to report on the work of the Board during 2023/24 in my new capacity as Chair of the Board.

The Board continues to take its scrutiny responsibilities very seriously and during the past 12 months the Board has had the opportunity to comment on a number of proposals and developments, as outlined in this report, such as the continued development of services being provided out of the Halton Health Hub in the Runcorn Shopping Centre, along with undertaking a specific scrutiny topic exploring issues associated with Health Inequalities.

In addition to thanking all members of the Board, I would particularly like to thank my Vice Chair, Sandra Baker, who has provided valuable support to me over the past 12 months, in my first year as Chair, along with acknowledging the work of Damian Nolan, Operational Director, Commissioning & Provision, for all the help and support given to the Board over the past year too.

Finally, I would just like to take this opportunity to pass the Board's sincere thanks onto all the dedicated staff and volunteers we have working across the health and social care system in Halton, both from the statutory and non-statutory sector. Without this level of dedication and the continued hard work of our staff and volunteers, we certainly would not be able to continue to deliver quality services and care to the residents of Halton. Thankyou!!!

I look forward to 2024/25 and the continued challenge of ensuring the quality of health and social care services within Halton are of the highest standard.

Cllr Eddie Dourley, Chair

Health Policy and Performance Board Membership and Responsibility

The Board:

Councillor Eddie Dourley (Chair)
Councillor Sandra Baker (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Victoria Begg
Councillor Sian Davidson
Councillor Mike Fry
Councillor Emma Garner
Councillor Louise Goodall
Councillor Chris Loftus
Councillor Louise Nolan
Councillor Tom Stretch
Councillor Sharon Thornton

During 2023/24, David Wilson was Halton Healthwatch's co-opted representation on the Board and we would like to thank David for his valuable contribution.

The Lead Officer for the Board is Damian Nolan, Operational Director, Commissioning & Provision.

Responsibility:

The primary responsibility of the Board is to focus on the work of the Council and its Partners, in seeking to improve health in the Borough. This is achieved by scrutinising progress against the aims and objectives outlined in the Council's Corporate Plan in relation to the Health priority.

The Board have met four times in 2023/24. Minutes of the meetings can be found on the [Halton Borough Council website](#). It should also be noted that the Board, at each of their meetings, receive and scrutinise the minutes from Halton's Health and Wellbeing Board and monitors work/progress within this area.

This report summarises some of the key pieces of work the Board have been involved in during 2023/24.

GOVERNMENT POLICY- NHS AND SOCIAL CARE REFORM

Market Sustainability Plan

The Board heard about the Government's vision for adult social care in its white paper 'People at the Heart of Care' which proposes a range of reforms and initiatives to improve care and support for vulnerable people.

In relation to care provided for older people who needed a care home admission and vulnerable adults requiring care in their own home, the Government has set out plans for all local authorities with adult social care duties to undertake a 'fair cost of care exercise' (FCOC) with providers of these types of care, and to utilise this information to publish a Market Sustainability Plan in March 2023.

The requirements of the Market Sustainability Plans were set out for the Board along with details of the key plans to address market sustainability issues for Halton.

One Halton Place-Based Partnership

The Board received an update from the Place Director, NHS Cheshire & Merseyside in respect to the ongoing development of the Place-Based Partnership.

The update included a recap of the Integrated Care System (ICS) structure; the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside (C&M) Integrated Care Board (ICB); and Place Based Partnerships.

The Board acknowledged that Halton's ambitions were the responsibility of all partners working together to achieve a set of shared strategic objectives for Halton Place.

SERVICES

Care Worker Petition

At the Board meeting in November 2022, the Board received a public question in respect to the payment of the Foundation Living Wage to all care workers across Halton. Subsequently, a petition was received by the Council in February 2023, from Halton Care Workers, requesting a pay rise. Following receipt of this Councillor Wharton, Leader of the Council, responded to the petitioners. Details of the petition and Cllr Wharton's response were presented to the Board and discussed.

Safeguarding

The Board was advised that in April 2023, the Government announced that the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) would be delayed 'beyond the life of this Parliament', so whether the LPS was going to be introduced now depends on what the incoming Government wants to do after the Election. It was the view that the LPS would offer a streamlined alternative to the current Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) system.

Information was shared with Members on the number of DoLS application received in 2022/23; up by 6% on the previous year. Due to the increase in demand a number of independent Best Interests Assessors (BIAs) were used to ensure the backlog list was kept to below 12 months. Members were advised that work was ongoing to explore different strategies in order to streamline the internal DoLS process and increase the DoLS assessments that were completed by Halton's BIAs and therefore reduce the need for independent BIAs.

The Board would continue to receive regular Safeguarding Update reports, this included in November 2023, the presentation of Halton's Safeguarding Adults Board (HSAB) Annual Report 2022/23. The Board noted that the Annual Report had been developed in conjunction with partners, to ensure the report encompassed a multi-agency approach. It included performance data and comparisons between years, achievements in the year and highlighted areas of good practice regarding safeguarding in the Borough.

Primary Care Dental Services

In September 2023, the Board received a presentation regarding access to Dental Services, focused on the plans to improve access and activity. The Board received details on the development of the Dental Improvement Plan, which signalled NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's commitment and ambition to ensure that access was improved for routine, urgent and dental care for the most vulnerable populations and communities impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The issue of access to Dental Services is of particular concern to the Board and as such the Board plans to receive future updates on progress with regards to the impact that the Dental Improvement Plan is having on access etc.

Primary Care Access

In November 2023, the Board received details on the current position within Halton in respect to access to Primary Care and also details of the Primary Care Access Recovery Programme (PCARP) across Cheshire and Merseyside.

Members were advised how the pandemic had changed the landscape as to how Primary Care is accessed and the increase in practice capacity needed to keep pace with growing demand.

Members heard how there was a focus on streamlining access to care and advice; providing more proactive, personalised care from a multidisciplinary team of professionals; and helping people stay well for longer. Progress would be monitored and reported over the next 12 months and beyond, to ensure that the improvements required were seen.

Halton & Warrington Community Diagnostic Centre

The Board received details regarding the creation of Community Diagnostic Centres (CDC). They heard how Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust had been successful in securing new capital and revenue funding to develop a CDC on the Halton Hospital Site.

The Plan was in three phases: -

- Phase 1 – Fast Track CDC (already fully operational since June 2023);
- Phase 2 – CDC in Halton Health Hub in Runcorn Shopping City – to be operational in November 2023; and
- Phase 3 – New Build CDC at the Trust's Halton site – to be fully operational in October 2024.

Members heard how the CDC scheme would support improvements in population health outcomes across Halton and Warrington, through the creation of increased diagnostic capacity to support earlier diagnosis of conditions such as cardiac and respiratory disease or cancer.

Halton Health Hub

In November 2023, the Board received an update on the out of hospital hub based at Runcorn Shopping City.

Over the last 12 months, services such as Audiology, Optometry and Orthoptics had been operating out of the Hub and it had provided services to more than 3,000 patients. Details were provided about future plans to extend provision to include ultrasound, respiratory and phlebotomy services.

Members welcomed the opening of the Hub and acknowledged how well it had been received by residents.

The Standards for Employers of Social Workers and the Social Work Health Check (Adult Social Care)

Information was presented to the Board in relation to the Standards for Employers of Social Workers in England, which was published by the Local Government Association (LGA).

The report detailed the eight standards in place and it was stated that under each standard, there was a list of things that employers should do in order to meet those standards.

It was also reported that the Health Check survey for 202 was co-ordinated at a national level with national, regional and local reports being produced. Halton's Social Workers took part in the survey between October 2022 and January 2023. The report gave details of questions asked and responses, as well as examples of statements made and the scores given.

Outcomes of further surveys would continue to be presented to the Board.

Carers Respite - Finance

The Board considered a report which provided an update on the key aspects of the use of the funding available for respite services for carers in the Borough.

The Board was advised that the budget was available to spend on direct respite provision of services for carers of people who were in receipt of adult social care services as part of a carers assessment; carers who applied to Halton Carers Centre for finance to support their caring role; and as small grants to voluntary and independent sector organisations who applied.

The allocated respite budget had increased year on year, however the spend against these allocated budgets does fluctuate dependent on activity / demand.

Suicide Prevention

In February 2023, the Board received a report from the Director of Public Health, which gave an overview of work taking place to reduce suicides at a local, regional and national level.

The report provided data on suicides at all levels, provided information on the Local Suicide Prevention Action Plan and described the key actions and successes which included work taking place at a regional level, which Halton contributed to and benefitted from. The Board heard about the work taking place on the Cheshire and Merseyside Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan and the Beyond Children

and Young People Transformation Programme. Details on the new National Suicide Prevention Strategy and its areas of focus were also presented to the Board.

POLICY

The Big Conversation

In June 2023, the Board received details on the approach being taken to 'The Big Conversation', which was integral to formulating a new Council Corporate Plan, to take effect from April 2024.

The Board noted that the Council would need to provide adequate opportunity for meaningful public consultation and ultimately produce a Corporate Plan, which was unique and meaningful to the people of Halton. 'The Big Conversation' was all about engaging with the public so that they understood the challenges the Council is facing.

The Board endorsed the approach being taken and put forward a number of ideas as to how to engage with people.

Further updates were provided to the Board in November 2023 and February 2024 on progress.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Review

The DFG was established 34 years ago and are mandatory capital grants that are available from local authorities, to pay for essential housing adaptations to help disabled people live an independent live and stay in their own homes.

New DFG guidance was issued in 2022, to advise local authorities how they could effectively and efficiently deliver the DFG funded adaptations. This brought together existing policy frameworks, legislative duties and powers, and recommended best practice to help local authorities' best serve disabled tenants and residents in their area.

The Board received information on the current issues faced in Halton relating to the demand for the service and described the benchmarking exercise carried out. This had provided assurance that current DFG practice was working well for the people of Halton however, a further review of the policy and processes was still required, in light of the published DFG Guidance. A steering group would be established to explore these options and the item would return to the Board at a future date once the review had been concluded.

Councillor Care Home Visits Guidance

In June 2023, the Board received updated guidance on undertaking Care Home visits.

The Board were advised that the revised guidance had been developed to support elected Members undertake visits to local care homes. Previous guidance was used as the basis for the revised document, but the approach now focussed more on the engagement and relationship building role of Councillors, and less on an inspection type approach.

The Board noted that the guidance aimed to support and facilitate the important role that Councillors have in developing relationships with and advocating (as appropriate) on behalf of care home residents and their families.

One Halton Health & Wellbeing Strategy & Update

The Board received a presentation from the Director of Public Health (DPH) regarding the development of the One Halton and Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy.

Developments within the NHS had led to the creation of the One Halton Place – Based Partnership, and as a partnership approach it was agreed that a shared Strategy be adopted.

Details were shared on consultation process undertaken, priorities identified and its four underlying themes – tackling the wider determinants of health; supporting communities in starting well; supporting communities in living well; and supporting communities in ageing well. Two-year goals and five-year goals for each of the themes have been identified.

The Strategy identified important system priorities and a strategic framework that will be used to develop a delivery plan.

The Board would receive update reports on progress on the delivery plan at the appropriate time.

Public Health Annual Report (PHAR)

Since 1988, DPHs have been tasked with preparing annual reports – an independent assessment of the health of local populations. The annual report was the DPH's professional statement on the health of local communities, based on sound epidemiological evidence and interpreted objectively.

The Board was advised that the theme for the PHAR for 2022/23 had focused on health improvement and prevention work to support the Halton community with their health in the different stages of their lives, as well as coping with pressures such as the recent pandemic and rising cost of living. To do this four key life stages were used as a guide to the issues – Start, Strong, Live and Well.

Respite Care Policy

Following a number of reports previously presented to the Board over the past 18 months – 2 years, regarding Respite Care Services, in February 2024 the Board received the new Respite Care for Adults with Care and Support Needs and their Carers Policy.

The policy sets out the Council's approach to respite care provision for adults with care and support needs (e.g. older people and adults with a learning disability), the primary aim of the policy being to ensure that staff are aware of the local respite offer in order to be able to arrange appropriate support that meets the needs of the cared for person and their carer.

Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy 2023-26

Presented to the Board in February 2024, the Commissioning Strategy for Care and Support outlines the Council's commissioning intentions over the next three years, which aims to support residents and unpaid carers and their families, to have access to the right services, information, advice and guidance in order to make good decisions about the care and support they needed.

The Board were presented with the detail of the commissioning intentions which have been categorised into six priority areas which provides the focus in aiming to support the key challenges identified. These six priorities are: -

- Universal Prevention & Wellbeing;
- Independent at Home;
- Socially Engaged;
- Housing;
- Good, Local, Affordable, Quality Care; and
- A Confident, Sufficient & Skilled Workforce.

SCRUTINY REVIEWS

At the Board's meeting in February 2023, it was agreed that the 2023/24 work topic would examine *health inequalities across Halton and approaches to reduce them.

It was agreed that the Board would consider:

- The epidemiological distribution of health inequalities;
- Recent trends;
- The impact of external forces such as the cost-of-living crisis and COVID-19; and
- Approaches that are being used to address health inequalities through contracts, partnership working and direct provision of services.

**Whilst health inequalities may span the life course, this scrutiny topic review focused on health inequalities from an Adults perspective.*

At the time of writing this report, the outcome from the scrutiny review is due to be presented to the Council's Executive Board.

PERFORMANCE

The Health Policy and Performance Board has a key role in monitoring and scrutinising the performance of the Council in delivering outcomes against its key health priorities. Therefore, in line with the Council's performance framework, during the year the Board has been provided with thematic reports which have included information on progress against key performance indicators, milestones and targets relating to Health.

INFORMATION BRIEFING

During 2023/24, the Board continued to receive an Information Briefing Bulletin in advance of each of the Board meetings.

The Information Briefing is a way of trying to manage the size of the agendas of the Board meetings better. Including information on topics which were previously presented to Board as reports only for the Board's information now into the Information Briefing bulletin allows the Board to focus more on areas where decisions etc. are needed.

Example of areas that have been included in the Information Briefing over the last 12 months have included: -

- Cheshire & Merseyside Elective Restoration
- Healthwatch Halton Annual Report 2022-23
- Adult Social Care Annual Customer Care Report 2022-2023
- Adult Social Care Annual Report 2022-2023

WORK TOPICS FOR 2024/25:

At the meeting of the Board in February 2024, it was agreed that the focus of Scrutiny topic for 2024/25 would be on Community (non-GP) NHS services within Halton.

At the time of writing this report, a topic brief is currently being developed to outline the scope of this work.

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