

REPORT TO: Health & Wellbeing Board

DATE: 12 March 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Sally Yeoman Chief Executive Officer – Halton and St Helens VCA
Rebecca Taylor – Head of Operations – Community Mental Health

PORTFOLIO: Health & Wellbeing

SUBJECT: Social Need Support for Secondary Care Mental Health Patients

WARD(S) All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an update on the integrated offer between Mersey Care and Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector to address social needs of secondary care mental health patients to support delivery of the One Halton Living Well Strategic Priorities.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 **Introduction & Background** - The NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24 identified the need for the Involvement of the VCFSE sector to help realise the identified patient benefits stating:

- The involvement of the VCFSE sector in the design and delivery of services can ensure that they are genuinely co-produced, recognising the local context.
- Systems, commissioners and mental health providers are asked to consider how the VCFSE sector could support local ambitions and whether the current commissioning approach encourages, or blocks, their involvement.

3.3 To support the delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan for Mental Health, NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) provided an opportunity for trusts to bid for Community Mental Health transformation funding over a three-year period in line with the NHS Long Term Plan for Mental Health. The funding was for mental health in adults and older adults (not dementia care).

- 3.4 The funding was intended to support the interface between primary and secondary mental health care to transform delivery of care for those people who fall in the categories of severe and enduring mental illness and those with complex needs and their carers. The bid had to include specific care pathways for people with Personality Disorder, Eating Disorders and Community Rehabilitation.
- 3.5 Since late in 2020 Mersey Care (operating as NWB in Mid-Mersey) began discussions with the three Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) covering Halton, Knowsley, St Helens and Warrington to understand the role of the local VCFSE sector and the potential to include it as part of the transformation programme for Mid-Mersey.
- 3.6 In February 2021, an exploratory conversation hosted by the CVS network with local groups and organisations across the four places was held. More than 30 groups attended to hear an update on the work and to explore what role they might be able to play.
- 3.7 This has resulted in a new way of working with the local VCFSE sector and the adoption of a model led by the CVS network, supported and funded by Mersey Care. Although we know there are some similarities within each of the places and communities in Mid Mersey, the work with the VCFSE sector requires a Place-based approach and the programme has developed a specific offer for Halton to address local need using the unique Place community assets available. Due to the success of the Mid-Mersey work pilot the Trust has adopted this approach across its whole footprint and implemented a strategic forum to lead the work.
- 3.8 Mental Health Care Navigators across the three places have been appointed with the skills, attributes and local experience to ensure they are able to support clients/carers on an individual need basis. It is expected users will be supported for up to 6 weeks to ensure they have been supported to access the most appropriate level of bespoke support within the community to meet their individual needs. The Mental Health Care Navigators work with users/carers to build up a good rapport and foster healthy and positive service user-care navigator relationships.
- 3.9 **Halton** - The work in Halton built on the ICB commissioned support that helped develop a Mental Health Alliance in the local VCFSE sector and tested out a link worker approach. What has evolved is the creation of two VCFSE Mental Health Navigator roles, managed by Halton & St Helens VCA, but embedded in the secondary care community teams and Mental Health in-patient Units. The service:
- Act as a connector/sign-poster between health care professionals, VCFSE groups and local people
 - Facilitates a Voluntary Sector Mental Health forum and builds an alliance of local VCFSE sector providers that support

engagement between mental health professionals and the sector

3.10 **Capacity Building Support for Peer-support and Third Sector Crisis Prevention groups.** The service has built upon Halton & St Helens VCA's (VCA hereafter) existing programme of Third Sector support. VCA are Halton's Council for Voluntary Sector (CVS) and have a membership of over 500 Halton based VCFSE Sector organisations. VCA offer a tailored programme of support, training and networking opportunities that are aimed at both existing VCFSE sector mental health organisations and the development of new ones.

3.11 **Core Outcomes / Benefits:**

- The provision of a point of contact for mental health improvement, allowing for greater cross-sector working between NHS, Council and VCFSE partners.
- Being based with VCA allows for joined up offers of support, as a central location with several Third Sector partners already based there.
- Service users accessing the site will have opportunities to engage with other services and projects, increasing the range and type of support available.
- The Navigators offer a varied range of support for groups that support people with protected characteristics such as veterans, disabled people and carers
- An investment fund that has supported the development of capacity within the sector to achieve the ambitions of the transformation programme.

3.12 **What we have delivered:** Since inception the whole programme has provided **£64k investment into 14 VCSE projects and programmes.** These programmes have supported individuals living with a Serious Mental Illness including 4 short term winter crisis interventions from December to January 24 / 25.

3.13 **Quarterly Mental Health Alliance** - bringing together representatives of local VCFSE, working in partnership with the statutory and clinical mental health services, creating an interface between them. Sharing knowledge and good practice and identifying opportunities that ensure residents of Halton get the right mental health support at the right time. Key goals set out by VCSE alliance members include:

- Increasing investment and growth in the sector to support increase in demand and create preventative services and activities.
- Developing a recognised kite mark for trusted providers that isn't onerous but gives a level of assurance around service

and support expectations.

- Identifying, sourcing and / or developing relevant training to support alliance members specifically around mental health support.
- aligning services to an appropriate directory that highlights trusted providers

3.14 **Mental Health Care Navigator Team have:**

- Received 179 referrals (end of January 2025) with identified needs covering:
 - reducing anxiety and social isolation
 - increasing activities in the community, increased learning, engaging in volunteering.
- Discharged 65% of referrals
- engaged individuals with over 40 different activities
- Worked closely with referring teams to improve communication, quality of information and reduce referrals where individual isn't ready.
- supported individuals to share their lived experience.

3.15 **Strategic Development** – Identifying needs and gaps in and around the sector and supporting collaboration of new services including:

- Runcorn Deaf Club with Deafness Resource Centre
- Photography sessions with Hazelhurst Studios
- Developing Crisis intervention support offer with Sean Bailey Wellness and Space Runcorn

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Service is funded from NHSE via Community Mental Health Transformation monies and a three-year contract is in place with the option to extend for a further two.

5.2 Further work will be undertaken to determine if cost savings are achieved via a reduction in length of stay in community teams and a reduction in crisis presentations from this cohort.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

This integrated service offer contributes to the delivery of this priority

by facilitating access for secondary Mental Health patients to community assets to reduce dependence on statutory services.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

This investment has created two additional jobs for local people.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

The families of Secondary Care mental health patients who receive this service benefit from the improved wellbeing of their relative and the additional safeguarding support provided by the additional resource.

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

Research indicates that people with mental health conditions often experience worse physical health outcomes. This includes higher rates of chronic diseases and lower life expectancy (Kings Fund 2024) and this service seeks to address this by working directly with the most vulnerable secondary Care mental health patients and connecting them to community assets that can help prevent poor health.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

By connecting secondary care mental health patients to the local community offer this has reduced unnecessary travel.

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

This model was co-produced with the sector and therefore embraces the strength that communities can play in the recovery journey of secondary care mental health patients.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Financial challenges in the VCFSE sector from changes to National Insurance may mean a reduction in the local community offer. An example of this financial pressure is the recent closure of the MIND service in Halton. Halton & St Helens VCA are working with partners including Mersey Care to manage and mitigate this risk.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None identified. Service intends to address equality and diversity challenges faced by Halton Secondary Care mental health patients by connecting them with community assets.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 This service will positively impact climate change by reducing unnecessary travel by ensuring patients are connected to the local community offer.

10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

[One Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-27](#) – Director of Public Halton Metropolitan Borough Council

[NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24](#) – Claire Murdoch - National Mental Health Director and Senior Responsible Officer, NHS England and NHS Improvement

[Mental Health 360 | Inequalities | The King's Fund](#) - [Helen Gilbert](#)
Saoirse Mallorie