

# Health Policy and Performance Board

## Annual Report

**April 2024 - March 2025**



Colleagues, in my capacity as Chair, I am pleased to report on the work of the Health Policy & Performance Board during 2024/25.

As you would expect, the Board continues to take its scrutiny responsibilities very seriously and during the last 12 months, the Board has taken the opportunity to scrutinise and comment on numerous health and care services as outlined in this report.

Given the well documented and long standing pressure's experienced by Health & Care Services, I believe the Board has performed its duties in a fair and robust manner to ensure the people of Halton receive the best services available.

In addition to the regular scrutiny meetings, the Board has also undertaken another specific scrutiny topic during 2024/25 exploring NHS Community Health Services, which has required the Board to hold an additional 6 meetings through the course of the past 12 months. In addition to the meetings, as part of the scrutiny topic, we also conducted site visits to the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) and the Widnes Urgent Treatment Centre. The visit to NWAS in particular highlighted the difficulties being experienced by front line NHS services.

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, along with acknowledging the work of Damian Nolan, Director - Commissioning & Provision and his colleagues from the Adults Directorate, Louise Wilson, Denise Taylor and Emma Bragger, for all the help and support they have given to myself and the Board over the past year as well.

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 2025/26 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 2024/25, 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, 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 2024/25. 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 2024/25.

## **GOVERNMENT POLICY- NHS AND SOCIAL CARE**

### **One Halton Place Based Partnership**

The One Halton Partnership Board is the vehicle for the delivery of national priorities, local priorities and Halton's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Achieving One Halton's ambitions is the responsibility of all partners working together to achieve a set of shared strategic objectives for Halton Place: Wider determinants of Health, Starting Well, Living Well and Ageing Well.

The report that was presented to the Board in November outlined the current One Halton Partnership activities, which built on previous activities reported to the Board and specifically focused on how NHS Cheshire & Merseyside (Halton Place) were contributing to these activities.

## **SERVICES**

### **Dental Services**

In September, the Board received an update on dental services within Halton. Information was shared in relation to progress made against the local dental improvement plan, along with an update in respect to the national dental recovery plan.

Dental care remains one of the key priorities for NHS Cheshire & Merseyside. The Board heard how there had been an increase in access across the region since 2023/24 and this had led to a number of providers now offering urgent care. Additionally, a new pathway was created for looked after children and vulnerable patients such as those receiving cancer treatment.

### **NHS Funded Gluten Free Prescribing**

The Board considered a report from NHS Cheshire & Merseyside, which informed Members of the proposals to commence consultation on the cessation of NHS Funded Gluten Free Prescribing across Cheshire and Merseyside.

Members discussed the proposals and after taking into consideration a number of factors, it was agreed that the proposal to cease this represented a substantial variation to NHS Services locally and therefore if other local authority areas agreed the same, then the proposals would be subject to Joint Scrutiny arrangements, in line with the Cheshire and Merseyside Protocol for the establishment of Joint Health Scrutiny Arrangements.

### **Mental Health – Bed Services**

The Board received details on the availability and utilisation of mental health beds by Halton residents. Details were shared on the type and number of adult mental health inpatient commissioned beds and the utilisation of those and any out of area placements, along with details of services in place to support patients to safely remain in the community, reducing avoidable admissions, providing better quality and outcomes for local people and the challenges faced in ensuring local people were able to access inpatient mental health beds locally, when they needed them.

The Board heard how NHS Cheshire and Merseyside was implementing a Mental Health System Flow Programme in 2024/25 which was intended to reduce the numbers of patients waiting in a community setting for admission to a hospital bed,

reduce the numbers of patients waiting in acute hospital emergency departments for discharge into the community or to a mental health inpatient bed and reduce the number of patients who were clinically ready for discharge in mental health in-patient settings.

### **Integration – Warrington & Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (NHSFT) and Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHSFT**

The Board received an update on the integration between Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHSFT and Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHSFT.

Members were advised about the significant opportunities which had been identified to improve both patient services and staff experiences working at the front line, and were launching a programme of work to deliver integrated and collaborative models of care between both Trusts.

The Board will continue to monitor and receive updates as work progresses.

### **Carers**

The Board received details of the new All Age Carers Strategy which had been agreed under the One Halton governance framework. This Strategy arose from a review of the previous Strategy, engagement with carers and the wider partnership, and incorporated changes to national guidance where this had occurred. Halton worked with partners in the independent, voluntary and statutory sectors, to ensure a wide range of factors, engagement and types of provision that could be supported.

The Board also welcomed Mr Carl Harris, Manager of Halton Carers Centre, who presented details of activities being undertaken at the Centre and the support being provided to carers in Halton.

### **Housing Solutions**

In November, the Board received a report which provided an update on the homelessness service provision administered by the Housing Solutions Team.

The report provided details on homelessness performance, services being commissioned, S21 Notice's seeking possession or eviction, future challenges and contributing factors affecting the service delivery, as well as funding information. It was reported that a recent survey had found that Halton had the lowest number of rough sleepers and hotel occupancy in comparison with its neighbouring authorities.

### **Adults Principal Social Worker (PSW) & Principal Occupational Therapist (POT) Annual Reports**

At the February Board, Members received the annual reports which provided details about the two roles and how they play a key role in representing and promoting the social work and occupational therapy profession. The reports also provided details of key developments and challenges over the past 12 months.

The Board heard how having a POT working alongside the PSW adds diverse leadership within adult social care and has a positive impact on local populations.

Also at the February Board, as part of the PSW Annual report and included as a separate Board report, Members received the results of Employer Standards Health Check Survey 2024 (Adult Social Care), which outlines that the required standards were being met.

## **POLICY**

### **Adult Social Care Prevention Strategy 2023-2027**

In June, the Board received details of the Adult Social Care Prevention Strategy which sets out the vision and focus for Adult Social Care's role in Prevention in Halton over the next four years. The Board heard how the Strategy has been closely aligned to the Council's Adult Social Care Vision of improving the health and wellbeing of local people, so that they lived longer, healthier and happy lives.

### **Property Pool Plus Policy**

The Board received a report recommending several amendments be made to the Property Pool Plus (PPP) Policy. The Board considered the recommended changes and rationale for these, including changes to qualification criteria and amendments to the discretion criteria. It was reported that to further ensure that the Policy was compliant with new legislation and to seek views on the recommendations, a 12-week formal consultation process would begin; the Board endorsed that the consultation process would move forward.

### **Public Health Annual Report (PHAR) 2023/24**

In September, the Board received the PHAR for 2023-24 'Healthy Start, Healthy Future', which focused on Children and Young People. The PHAR highlighted some of the key health challenges as well as some of the ways that the healthy schools programme tackled these. Members were referred to numerous case studies with some of Halton's schools and the different areas of focus such as obesity, vaping, intergenerational initiatives, young health champions and wellbeing.

Members also heard about the impact of empowered young people who had embraced key messages from the Personal, Social and Health Education curriculum, and who were inspired to promote change within their school communities.

The report was commended along with the work being undertaken by Public Health in the Borough.

### **Halton Safeguarding Adults Board (HSAB) Annual Report 2023/24**

Under the Care Act 2014, Safeguarding Adults Boards (SAB) are responsible for producing an annual report setting out their achievements and highlighting priorities for the following year.

The Report that was presented having been developed in conjunction with HSAB partners to ensure the report encompassed a multi-agency approach. The report included performance data and comparisons between years, achievements in the year and highlighted areas of good practice regarding safeguarding in the Borough.

The Board discussed the reporting of safeguarding incidents in the Borough and the facts and figures presented to them. It was noted that it was important that people knew when to report something, which may start as a concern initially.

### **Research & Practice Development Care Partnership**

In November, the Board welcomed members of the Research and Practice Development Care Partnership. The Partnership is a joint venture between Halton Borough Council's Adult Social Care Directorate, the University of Chester, Age UK Mid Mersey and the Caja Group. The Partnership aims to improve experiences of care by forging closer links between social care professionals and researchers and the Board heard about the work it had been undertaking and its benefits.

### **Joint Health Scrutiny Arrangements – Cheshire & Merseyside**

In September, the Board received a report proposing changes to the Joint Health Scrutiny Arrangements which were first developed 10 years ago. The arrangements were developed as an operating framework for joint health scrutiny arrangements across the Cheshire and Merseyside Local Authorities.

Proposed changes were being proposed in light of recent legislative changes. The Board endorsed the changes and recommended approval of the revised arrangements to Council.

### **Quality Assurance Framework – Quality Assurance Team**

Members were provided with details of the Framework which brought together the process, methods and tools used by the Quality Assurance Team to gather evidence and intelligence about Adult Social Care services that were commissioned in Halton. The Board noted that these quality assurance activities supported the delivery of social care commissioned services, in meeting and exceeding contractual, regulatory and quality standards.

### **Housing Adaptations for Disabled People Policy and Home Assistance Policy**

In February, the Board received details of the two policies to scrutinise.

They were advised that the Home Adaptations for Disabled People Policy was the internal policy used by staff for determining eligibility, approval and management of both minor and major housing adaptations requests, whilst the Home Assistance Policy was the corresponding public facing document, required to be in place as per the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order (RRO) 2002.

Following the policies being presented discussions at the Board focused on level of grants available and the length of time applications took.

## **SCRUTINY REVIEWS**

At the Board's meeting in February 2024, it was agreed that the 2024/25 work topic would examine Community NHS Health (Non-GP) Services, specifically;

- Non-Urgent Services
  - NHS Community Nursing
  - Podiatry
  - Therapy
  - Musculoskeletal services
- Urgent Services

- Urgent Treatment Centres (Widnes & Runcorn)
- Northwest Ambulance Service
- Urgent care responses

Community health services play a key role in the NHS. They keep people well, often with complex needs, at home and in community settings close to home and support people to live independently. These services often involve collaboration across health and social care teams, including professionals like community nurses, therapists, and social care workers.

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 2024/25, 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: -

- North West Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (NW ADASS): Annual Report 2023-2024
- Healthwatch Halton Annual Report 2023-2024
- NW ADASS & NW Employers: Delivering Great Social Care in the North West

## **WORK TOPICS FOR 2025/26:**

At the meeting of the Board in February 2025, it was agreed that the focus of Scrutiny topic for 2025/26 would be on Mental Health Support. Specifically looking at how existing provision was meeting current demand and responding to predicted demand, and equality of access to services for marginalised or minority groups, covering both Adults and Children and Young People's services.

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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