

## **Adult Care Services Report for Health in Dacorum Meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Herts. County Council (HCC) has supported care homes with the cost of PPE, extra staffing and support to care providers facing financial difficulties. In its' 2021/22 Budget, HCC exceeded the Real Living Wage for careworkers.

HCC's trading company, Herts at Home, which was set up to step in when a care provider fails had not initially found it practical to recruit employees made redundant from other sectors such as hospitality because of the considerable investment and training required by staff. However at the December 16<sup>th</sup> 2020 meeting of the Adult Care and Health (ACS) Panel it was reported that this was changing. Positive feedback was received from those changing career into the care sector that they welcomed their new roles.

There had been a significant decrease in Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However HCC officers were working closely with CQC staff to advise of any concerns that may arise and sharing data as appropriate to enable the CQC to undertake targeted assessments as required.

At the December 2020 meeting, the number of care homes rated as requiring improvement or inadequate was not unusual for the point in the performance cycle, and the number would decrease as the year progressed and measures were put in place to address concerns raised.

At the December 2020 meeting, statistics indicated increased waiting times for hospital discharges and assessments. Covid-19 meant that discharges and assessments had to be conducted differently, resulting in a lower number achieved within target. HCC officers had placed additional resources into this service. It was acknowledged that Covid restrictions would continue to present challenges with face to face assessments.

HCC is progressing a new Dementia Strategy, but Covid-19 meant that the five-year strategy had been postponed in favour of a one-year interim action plan. The importance of encouraging anyone who suspected that they or a family member had symptoms of dementia to contact their GP or ACS was noted.

HCC has an Adult Care Services – Winter Plan which was set out following discussion and engagement with stakeholders. The second wave of Covid-19 impacted heavily on those in Herts with care and support needs. ACS has been working intensively to support people during this time whilst holding as far as possible to the aims of the winter plan.

At its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021, the ACS Panel received an update on domestic abuse, which included the Domestic Abuse Bill, expected to receive Royal Assent in spring 2021. The Bill places on county councils and unitary authorities, the duty to create Local Partnership Boards to oversee domestic abuse and safe accommodation services, develop a Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment and provide support to victims and their children in safe accommodation. These duties will come into effect on 01.04.21.

HCC published its' Domestic Abuse Strategy in 2016, to be led and delivered through a multi-agency structure, including borough councils.

The Government has published guidance that the instruction to stay at home during the Covid-19 pandemic does not apply if someone needs to leave their home to escape domestic abuse. However Police recorded crime data shows an increase in offences flagged as domestic abuse-related during the pandemic and there has generally been an increased demand for victim services.

The "Ask for Ani" scheme has been launched in community pharmacies whereby a victim can "Ask for Ani" at the counter and be taken into the consulting room to contact specialist support services.

C/Cllr Fiona Guest