

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ADULTS & HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON MONDAY 31st MARCH 2025, 6.40 - 10.00pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Pippa Connor (Chair), Cathy Brennan, Thayahlan Iyngkaran, Mary Mason, Sean O'Donovan and Sheila Peacock

Co-optees: Helena Kania and Evelyn Trimmingham

48. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting, and Members noted the information contained therein'.

49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

Cllr Iyngkaran gave apologies for lateness and joined the meeting during item 9.

50. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Pippa Connor declared an interest by virtue of her membership of the Royal College of Nursing.

Cllr Pippa Connor declared an interest by virtue of her sister working as a GP in Tottenham.

Cllr Thayahlan Iyngkaran declared an interest as a consultant radiologist and a deputy medical director.

Helena Kania declared an interest as a co-Chair of the Joint Partnership Board.

52. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/ PRESENTATIONS/ QUESTIONS

None.

53. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th December 2024 be approved as an accurate record.

54. ACTION TRACKER

It was noted that, since the publication of the agenda papers, two further responses to action points had been received and circulated to the Panel Members. These responses related to Action Point 29 (Disabled Access to shops/restaurants in Haringey) and Action Point 43 (Self-neglect and Hoarding policy).

Asked by Cllr Mason about Action Point 37 (cost savings for transitions), Dominic O'Brien, Scrutiny Officer, clarified that this point would be addressed as part of a joint meeting on transitions between the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel and the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel which was expected to take place over the next couple of months.

Asked by Cllr Peacock about the progress on Action Points 30, 31 & 32 (Quality Assurance), Dominic O'Brien said that officers were preparing a response on Action Point 32 and that the CQC had been contacted about Action Points 30 & 31 but no response had been received.

55. UPDATE ON NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Eve Trimingham was introduced to the Panel and her appointment as a non-voting co-opted Member of the Panel was approved.

Cllr Connor noted that, as approved by the Standards Committee, the way that co-opted members were appointed to Scrutiny Panels was changing and that approval from the main Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be required for all new appointments in future.

Cllr Sheila Peacock commented that it was important to advertise the co-optee vacancies to attract a wider range of applicants. Dominic O'Brien agreed to provide further details to the Panel in writing about the proposed recruitment process for 2025/26. **(ACTION)**

RESOLVED – That Evelyn Trimingham be appointed as a non-voting co-opted Member of the Panel.

RESOLVED – That the non-voting co-opted Members of the Panel for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year be confirmed as Helena Kania and Evelyn Trimingham.

RESOLVED – That the revisions to the Protocol for Non-voting Co-opted Members as agreed by the Standards Committee in March 2025 be noted.

56. AIDS & ADAPTATIONS / DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT - UPDATE

Cllr Connor introduced this item, noting that this was the fourth report to the Panel on this issue. The Panel had been tracking this closely following a series of recommendations made in 2022 after concerns were expressed by residents about delays and communication issues.

Alexandra Dominigue, Commissioning Project Manager, explained that a project board had been established to support implementation of the Panel's recommendations and that her role had included support and development for the Board. Developments since the most recent update to the Panel in February 2024 included:

- Undertaking benchmarking work with neighbouring local authorities on the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and have incorporated that learning into the team's work.
- Expanding the Occupational Therapist (OT) adaptations function by appointing an OT Duty Team to triage cases and reduce the number of inappropriate referrals to the main OT Team.
- Improving communications with residents through a 4-6 week contact pathway to update them about the status of their case.
- Reducing waiting lists by commissioning an external team to provide additional support on assessments and support planning processes.
- Use of resident feedback, complaints and Members' inquiries to improve monitoring of service satisfaction.
- Changing how equipment and adaptations are procured by using the Dynamic Purchasing System.
- Streamlining the commissioning process with a smaller group of suppliers.

Alexandra Dominigue then responded to questions from the Panel:

- Asked by Cllr Connor about the current data on cases with delays, Alexandra Dominigue explained that the case management system displayed how long individuals had been waiting and that reports were produced and reviewed regularly using this data with cases reallocated according to priority where appropriate. The overall waiting list had been reduced from over 1,000 in September 2024 to a current figure of 388. Over the same time period, the average number of days on the waiting list had been reduced from close to 200 days down to 122 days. The number of assessments completed in a month had increased from 50 to 210. In addition, the number of under-18s on the waiting list had been reduced from 33 to one.
- Cllr Mason reported that, in her experience as a ward Councillor, the number of people contacting her about OT cases and assessments had greatly reduced recently. She noted that the calls still coming through tended to be more

complex cases, particularly relating to mental health, and requested further detail on how these cases were dealt with, including liaison with Housing services. Alexandra Dominigue highlighted the work on the Older People's Housing Strategy which had enabled conversations on supporting Council, Housing Association and private tenants by ensuring seamlessness in services. This work was ongoing, but she felt that there were improvements so far in terms of the communications and working together between different teams. Jo Baty, Service Director for Adult Social Services, acknowledged that there was a long way to go in relation to cases where there were multiple layers of complexity. In some cases, there could be several different professionals working with someone and so the Council had made a commitment that there would be a lead professional on aids and adaptation cases so that there would be someone taking ownership for coordination. This would help to improve the tracking of cases and avoid unnecessary delays.

- Cllr Connor requested clarification on the progress towards the improved information sharing highlighted in paragraph 4.6.2 of the report. Alexandra Dominigue explained that this was an ongoing piece of work including improvements to internal communications, the sharing of information with residents and working with communications colleagues on the format of communications, including easy read format. Cllr Connor suggested that there should be a future update to the Panel on how the improvements to communications were working in practice. **(ACTION)**
- Asked by Helena Kania about the timetable for the development of the new case management system referred to in paragraph 4.8.1 of the report, Alexandra Dominigue said that a written response would be provided on this. **(ACTION)** She added that, regardless of the system, it was essential that there was the right management and proactive culture on dealing with complexity and casework.
- Asked by Helena Kania about contact with residents from the named person responsible for their case, Alexandra Dominigue explained that management meetings included looking at information such as the number of people on the waiting list and how regularly they had been contacted. This could vary according to resources available which could fluctuate due to the national OT shortage.
- Cllr Peacock asked about equipment used through the Connected Care service as an emergency alert after a fall. Jo Baty agreed to look into the specific case referred to outside of the meeting. Sara Sutton, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing & Health, noted that a review on the Connected Care service was expected to be carried out in 6-12 months' time.
- Cllr O'Donovan requested further details about the next steps for the implementation of the recommendations set out in section 4 of the report. Alexandra Dominigue noted that, on the pilot project for more regular contact with residents, she was directly involved in this programme, meeting fortnightly with the team and could provide a written update with further details. **(ACTION)** Improvements on advocacy were being considered through the Commissioning Co-production group and the team had worked closely with Disability Action

Haringey to ensure that they had sufficient capacity. Cllr Connor suggested that it would be useful for the Panel to receive further details about the work of the project board and the Commissioning Co-production group. **(ACTION)**

- Cllr Iyngkaran queried the inaccuracies in notes from meetings between officers and residents and suggested the use of AI tools to assist with the accuracy of transcriptions. Jo Baty noted that part of the efficiencies work included the use of tools such as AI to reduce the administrative burden on staff and free them up to use their core skills, so she agreed with the potential benefits of being creative in the area. It may therefore be possible to bring a further update on this area of work to the Panel in future. **(ACTION)** Sara Sutton noted that they had recently launched a translation and interpreting service with embedded assistance which was another example of utilising new technology.
- Asked by Cllr Iyngkaran about the triaging of cases, Alexandra Dominigue explained that triaging was based on priority so there was an urgent waiting list and a longer-term waiting list.

Nazarella Scianguetta, a member of the Haringey Wheelchair User Group, then spoke about the difficulties experienced by residents on housing and OT issues. She felt that OTs did not always listen to the residents about their requirements which risked resources being wasted on unsuitable adaptations. She also commented that it could be difficult for residents to make contact with the right person when they needed to and that the notes of the meetings involving residents were sometimes inaccurate.

Alexandra Dominigue responded that this was not the standard that the department held itself to and committed to looking at the individual circumstances of the cases described. She added that details of assessments or support plans should be shared and agreed upon with the resident and their advocate/carer and that the implementation of practices such as this should be overseen by a team manager. Once agreement had been reached then this would be transferred to a surveyor who would agree with a construction organisation on how the works would be undertaken. At the end of the process, the OT then checked that the works had been carried out to the agreed specification.

Sara Sutton, as the new Corporate Director for Adults, Housing & Health from 1st April 2025, commented that she was aware of Nazarella Scianguetta's case and that it was important to have an understanding of cases such as this as an opportunity for learning and reflection, noting that access to suitable accommodation was a critical issue for the Council.

With regards to communications, Jo Baty spoke about improvements to the culture of the service, including the tone and engagement with residents being consistently good and anything written about a resident's case being signed off by them.

Cllr Connor summarised key points highlighted by the Panel:

- Further details about the work of the project board and the Commissioning Co-production group and progress against the Panel's previous recommendations.
- Progress on innovative approaches using new technologies including AI.

- Accurately capturing the voice of residents in the discussions on their case.
- Improvements on contracts and commissioning, including through the Dynamic Purchasing System.
- Monitoring and tracking of case progress, the use of the support plan as progress is made and how the resident is included in that process.

Cllr Lucia das Neves, Cabinet Member for Health, Social Care and Wellbeing suggested that, given the relevance of the discussion on aids and adaptations to the bespoke housing programme, the Panel could consider some joint scrutiny work with the Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel. **(ACTION)**

57. PREPAREDNESS IN THE EVENT OF A FUTURE PANDEMIC

Introducing the report on this item, Will Maimaris, Director for Public Health, informed the Panel that the definition of a pandemic was an epidemic of an infectious disease beyond a single country and that this was an area that required input from emergency planning colleagues as well as public health.

Ahead of the discussion, Cllr Connor noted that the full plans on pandemic preparedness would not be produced until later in the year. Will Maimaris explained that there were two plans in development, one of which was a multi-agency pandemic response plan led by public health and the other was a separate Council pandemic plan focused on the broader response across Council services. He added that the plans would provide a framework for a response but would not set out the specific details of different possible scenarios.

Will Maimaris and colleagues from public health and emergency planning then responded to questions from the Panel:

- Cllr Connor requested further details about the coordination with hospitals, including on staffing, resilience and PPE equipment. Angharad Shambler, Senior Public Health Strategist, explained that the Hospital Trusts (North Middlesex and Whittington) had their own organisational plans with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) providing overall governance. She also noted that a national pandemic preparedness exercise would be taking place in the autumn, led by the Department of Health and Social Care, and would include actions and learning from the Covid pandemic.
- Asked by Cllr Connor how the potential closure of schools would be managed, Damani Goldstein, Consultant in Public Health, said that the partnership working with the Hospital Trusts and the ICB involved exercises to test responses and that this included schools, with headteachers part of the local planning. There was also some learning from the Covid pandemic on children's mental health, wellbeing and safety from the recent UK Health Security Agency (UK HSA) national conference. Schools would also be better prepared for online learning and support, though issues such as the needs of children who didn't have the necessary technology at home would need to be considered as the national and local planning progressed.

- Cllr lyngkaran raised concerns about the impact of school closures on children and how schools could be supported to stay open. Will Maimaris emphasised the need to minimise any impact on schools, including learning from the Covid pandemic and probably setting the threshold differently for closing schools. A better overall pandemic response could also prevent school closures. However, he also noted that some concerning trends such as school absenteeism, mental health and the impact of social media, all predated the Covid pandemic. Cllr das Neves noted that she had been lobbied during the pandemic to use HEPA air filters in schools but that this kind of measure required national leadership to be implemented.
- Expanding on the issue of planning exercises, Luke Lambert, Emergency Planning & Resilience Manager said that a large national planning exercise was scheduled for August 2025 and that feedback to the UK HSA on the preparation for this was being coordinated through the multi-agency Haringey Resilience Forum. He added that there had been extensive debriefing internally following the Covid pandemic which had not just fed into pandemic planning but also general emergency planning. This learning was captured internally across multiple services and fed through to the Resilience Emergency Planning Board which tracked the necessary actions. He agreed to establish whether the report that resulted from this could be shared more widely. **(ACTION)**
- Cllr lyngkaran queried how residents could be provided with accurate information about vaccines to make informed choices given the current levels of misinformation. Damani Goldstein replied that a lot of focused work on vaccinations had been maintained since the Covid pandemic with a programme of health champions. This included work in partnership with voluntary organisations related to communities with low vaccination uptake. Training was also being developed for people working closely with schools to help have more effective conversations about vaccines. Angharad Shambler added that there was a multi-agency vaccination group and close working with the ICB, including clinical leads from primary care. Luke Lambert noted that an important part of communications during large incidences was uniformity and ensuring that messages from national government and the NHS were reinforced locally through various methods and communication channels and disseminated through community outreach groups. There was an internal communications plan that could be used during major incidents.
- Cllr O'Donovan referred to the importance of support for vulnerable groups including older people, people who are isolated and rough sleepers. Damani Goldstein said that, on rough sleeping, there was general agreement on providing housing for everyone but that there were limitations outside of a pandemic situation with insufficient funding locally and that funding had not been provided for this from national level.
- Cllr Peacock expressed concerns about upper age limits for vaccines such as for RSV which meant that people aged 80+ were not eligible to receive them. Will Maimaris commented that RSV vaccine eligibility was based on national policy after trials which had showed poor evidence for effectiveness over the

- age of 80. This was therefore not something that the Council could influence locally and any change in policy would be from the UK Health Security Agency.
- Helena Kania emphasised the contribution of the local neighbourhood groups that had been set up during the Covid pandemic and also highlighted the approach of some European countries on encouraging all households to keep emergency supplies that could last for 72-hours. Angharad Shambler reiterated that a lot of work was done with health champions to promote preparedness for incidences such as heat waves or cold snaps so this would be relevant to the information and guidance that was currently being worked through. Luke Lambert added that a new community resilience toolkit was being launched by the London Resilience Unit which had a number of recommendations for local authorities around key messaging that could be shared with local communities. There would also be a new Strategic Community Commissioner starting in April who could help in the coordination of community volunteering and resilience during major incidents. Cllr das Neves added that there was existing advice at national level on items that households could store in case of emergencies.
 - Cllr Mason asked about readiness to respond on issues that had arisen during the pandemic including violence against women and girls (VAWG) (noting recent recommendations from research by Kings College London) and mental health. Will Maimaris suggested that Cllr Mason send the relevant research to the public health team and added that learning about pandemic responsiveness in these areas would be included in both the VAWG Strategy and the pandemic plans.
 - Cllr Mason highlighted the role of mutual aid groups in supporting people in various ways during the pandemic.
 - Cllr Mason spoke about the disproportionate impact of Covid on care workers and others in low-income jobs.
 - Asked by Cllr Brennan whether a system was still in place to send emergency text messages to residents, Luke Lambert agreed to look into this and provide a written response to the Panel. **(ACTION)** Angharad Shambler added that testing of texting on severe weather alerts had been carried out for residents who had participated in the Connected Communities service. However, she noted that there were issues about data sharing that needed to be carefully considered in partnership with the information governance teams. There was also work with primary care providers to text residents with particular health conditions who may be vulnerable to severe weather conditions.
 - Cllr Brennan highlighted the lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the pandemic. Will Maimaris responded that the Council did not keep a stock of PPE and that this was dealt with through the national and London resilience systems, so this was an area where the Council would want some further assurances.
 - Cllr Connor queried the safeguards against fraud that occurred during the pandemic from the public funds to support businesses. Will Maimaris responded that this was an issue for the national inquiry and that he was confident that the Council had used its funds appropriately when procuring necessary items during the pandemic.

- Asked by Cllr Connor about discharge of people with Covid from hospitals to care homes, Will Maimaris said that national policy and learning would contribute to the public health advice and that individual hospitals had business continuity plans to use in the event of a major incident.

58. COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CQC INSPECTION

Jo Baty, Service Director for Adult Social Services, reported to the Panel that the outcome of the recent CQC inspection had been published in January 2025 and highlighted some key areas requiring improvement that the Council was responding to. These included carers, waiting times, communications from the service and with residents, signposting and information/advice and co-production. Measures that were being taken by the Council to make improvements included:

- Proactive involvement of carers in co-production groups, which had begun over a year previously.
- Four more sessions with residents were expected in late April/early May, with one in each of the three physical localities in the Borough and one online. These sessions would be aimed at helping to refine priorities and timelines.
- Priorities for residents included improving availability of information and advice in a timely manner, access to respite services and reducing waiting times. In particular, a minimum standard of communication across the service was required, including improved letters, a more accessible website and striking the right balance between compassion and financial efficiency.
- A process was being put in place for some detailed performance management reports which would help with monitoring progress and benchmarking against other Boroughs.
- There was ongoing work on co-producing service specifications for home care.
- There were plans for the involvement of residents as quality assurers of service provision.
- There had been mixed feedback from members of the Joint Partnership Board (JPB) on engagement with Adult Social Care and there had been a review of how the JPB had been operating and how Adult Social Care could better engage. The report from Community Catalysts had been circulated in draft and a special meeting with the JPB on progressing the actions was planned. There would also be a recruitment process for a new independent JPB chair.
- Community Catalysts had also produced a draft report following a review of the Learning Disabilities Carer Forum and there would be a meeting with the Forum on this shortly.
- Both of the above reports and the action plans that would follow could be brought to the Scrutiny Panel at a later date. **(ACTION)**
- The necessary savings and efficiencies through measures such as assistive technology and the day services review would require engagement with residents and a co-production element.

Jo Baty and Cllr Lucia das Neves then responded to questions from the Panel:

- Asked by Cllr Peacock which residents groups had been engaged with, Jo Baty said that there were long-established relationships with various voluntary and community organisations, tenants' associations and residents' associations. Recent conversations had been held with the Somali Community Association, the Kurdish Community group and there was a forthcoming meeting expected with Jewish residents. Cllr Peacock suggested that some of the written materials produced by the Council needed to use terminology that a wide range of people from all communities could easily understand.
- Cllr Mason commented that communications from statutory services in general was poor. She welcomed short briefings that were made available to Councillors and suggested that these could be made more widely available online. She also suggested that some engagement approaches could be based on geographic areas and not just to specific community groups. Cllr das Neves noted that the forthcoming resident engagement sessions previously referred to by Jo Baty would be based on the three locality areas. Cllr Mason observed that these were quite large areas and Cllr das Neves agreed, noting that the national agenda around neighbourhoods may help with moving engagement to a more local level.
- Cllr Brennan observed that co-production seemed to be well understood at a senior level of the Council but that, at the front line, some elements of the approach appeared to be lost. She suggested that more training in this area could lead to improvements. Cllr das Neves acknowledged the importance of training, and also support on both sides of co-production, which Community Catalysts was assisting with as an external neutral organisation.
- Asked by Cllr Connor about the induction of new staff to the ethos of improved communications that the Council was aiming for, Jo Baty highlighted the importance of in-house bespoke training for all managers and engaging residents in expert-by-experience training to develop cultural change. Cllr Brennan emphasised the need to ensure that this ethos was also applied to the interactions of frontline staff with residents. Jo Baty agreed with this point and reiterated the importance of the work with managers as they were the gatekeepers to support and supervision for frontline staff. Cllr Connor proposed that this area of training for managers should be monitored by the Panel.

(ACTION)

- Eve Trimmingham spoke about issues with communications from the Council and the experience of residents and the local community that they didn't always receive the right information and the engagement that they expected. Cllr das Neves highlighted the role of ward Councillors as a good route to having concerns heard when people feel that something hasn't worked in the way that it should have.
- Cllr Iyngkaran suggested that consideration could be given to using independent co-production facilitators.
- Cllr O'Donovan highlighted the significant proportion of locum staff in the social care workforce and questioned how the communications ethos that had previously been discussed could be embedded with such a high turnover of staff. Jo Baty acknowledged that turnover in the sector was a national issue but

emphasised the importance of promoting what was unique about Haringey and its direction of travel in areas such as co-production, which she felt would help to attract good staff. She also commented that retention was also an issue which could be supported through initiatives such as mentoring or experiences in the health and voluntary sectors. Sara Sutton added that the Council would be playing a role in the national initiatives to bring people with health conditions back to work by working with health and social care providers to enable routes and opportunities to progress and develop skills from entry level roles. There were also dedicated schemes on employment support for local people linked to the Haringey Works programme. Further details could be brought to the Panel at a later date if required.

- Asked by Cllr O'Donovan about the development and engagement process for the new Carers' Strategy, Jo Baty responded the planning for this was underway including through the four events that were described earlier in the meeting and through the co-production work with carers over the previous 18 months. She added that carers had told the Council for a long time that they wanted information and advice in accessible formats, to know where to go to avoid escalation/crisis and for staff to be respectful, professional and to respond in a timely way. The sessions were therefore intended to hone in on priorities, to agree timelines and to establish a process by which residents could understand the changes that had been made and could then feedback whether they were experiencing social care differently.
- Cllr das Neves highlighted the role of the Adult Improvement Board in tracking progress on service improvement and the opportunity for the Panel to contribute as Cllr Connor and Cllr Iyngkaran were now on that Board. Asked by Cllr Mason if papers from the Board meetings could be circulated to the Panel Members, Sara Sutton said that a summary of key points discussed could be provided but that sharing of the full reports would not be appropriate. **(ACTION)**
- Cllr Connor reiterated that it would be useful for the Panel to track progress on a number of issues that had been discussed **(ACTION)** including:
 - the reports from Community Catalysts on the Joint Partnership Board and the Learning Disabilities Carer Forum (when available).
 - progress with the co-production work.
 - progress towards the website improvements.
 - progress on reducing Care Act assessment delays.
 - details on how residents could have easier access to the information about their case, such as through a phone app for example.
- Cllr Connor reminded the Panel that they would need to consider the financial constraints of the Council in the discussions on all of these issues.

59. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Cllr Connor informed the Panel that it had not been possible to conduct another Scrutiny Review due to staff constraints. There would be a further meeting with officers to update the draft report on Hospital Discharge and the updated version was expected to be circulated to Panel Members soon after that.

Cllr Connor informed the Panel that she had discussed with officers the possibility of placing a standing item on finance to the Panel's agendas for 2025/26 given the current importance of the pressures on the Adult Social Care budget.

Cllr Mason suggested that consideration could be given as part of the work programme to issues of poverty, particularly in relation to people with disabilities, given the pressures on welfare spending and on adult social care services.

Cllr O'Donovan suggested that issues on the work programme that could be prioritised included the Autism Strategy, support for carers, the impact of housing conditions and modern slavery.

Cllr Connor proposed that Panel Members could provide input by selecting their top three issues from the list on the draft work programme and provide their reasons for this. **(ACTION)**

60. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Dates for 2025/26 TBC.

CHAIR: Councillor Pippa Connor

Signed by Chair

Date