

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 21 October 2010

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), and Councillors Simon Chalk and Wanda King

Also Present:

Liz Altay, Rachael Cox, Ken Hazeldine

Officers:

Angie Heighway

Committee Services Officer:

Michael Craggs

21. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received from on behalf of Councillor Anita Clayton.

Apologies for absence were also received from Commander Phil Griffiths (Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue) and Inspector Ian Joseph (West Mercia Police)

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or any party whip.

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Chair

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 21 October 2010

23. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 7th September 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

24. INTERVIEW - WORCESTERSHIRE PCT - SARCS

The Panel welcomed Liz Altay and Rachael Cox from Worcestershire PCT to respond to five questions that had been drawn up earlier by the Panel on the possible introduction of a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in the West Mercia Police Force:

- 1) What is your provision at the moment for victims of sexual violence?

Worcestershire PCT Officers informed the Panel that the Worcestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (WRASAC) had been established to provide advice and support to women in Worcestershire who had suffered from sexual violence. The WRASAC was described as a charity funded service set up by NHS Worcestershire PCT and based in a confidential location in Worcester. Although the offices were not manned 24 hours a day, a 24 hour support hotline had been installed. This was seen as particularly useful for users living away from Worcester, e.g. Redditch. It was understood that approximately 180 women in Redditch had eventually received face-to-face support through the WRASAC.

A pledge to establish 'clear and agreed care pathways' equivalent to those of a SARC for victims of all ages of sexual violence had been signed by four NHS PCTs, including Shropshire County; Herefordshire; Worcestershire; and Telford & Wrekin, in partnership with West Mercia Police. The pledge appeared within a *Certificate of Stakeholder Agreement*, a document that principally set out to establish consensus amongst the relevant PCTs and West Mercia Police to deliver improved health and criminal justice outcomes for victims of sexual violence within the West Mercia Police area.

Work was being undertaken to strengthen the pathway to service entry to the WRASAC which had been identified as requiring strengthening.

- 2) What funding could you provide to support a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in the West Mercia area?

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 21 October 2010

The Panel was informed that no funding had been earmarked by the four PCTs within the West Mercia Police area to support the establishment of a SARC. It was understood that funding would not be forthcoming until, at the very least, a detailed business plan was drawn up explaining how the establishment of a SARC would save money in the medium-long term. The emphasis had been placed on developing a bottom-up approach building on what current provision of care for victims of sexual violence already existed.

All relevant PCTs had however signed the *Certificate of Stakeholder Agreement* to ensure partnership working to support victims of sexual violence. Having been informed that there existed a will amongst the PCTs to introduce a central service, the Panel suggested possible locations that might be able to act as a base for the service. The Alexandra Hospital was proposed as a potentially convenient location. However, the Panel was advised to acknowledge that immediate acute need for care and support required local provision as concern was raised that victims might not be able to access a centralised service.

- 3) Please could you briefly outline what changes are due to be made to the NHS and in particular to local PCTs?

The NHS White Paper *Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS* outlined the Government's proposed changes to the NHS. Commissioning powers would transfer from soon to be abolished PCTs to NHS Commissioning Boards and GP practice teams working in consortia, of which it was understood that three would be created for Worcestershire.

The Panel expressed concern that the proposed GP consortia in Worcestershire, including one earmarked for Redditch & Bromsgrove, would prove too small to be sufficiently strategic to implement and oversee a SARC. It was unclear what body emerging from the White Paper would be able to commission a SARC.

- 4) How are these changes to NHS and PCT provision of services likely to impact locally on potential support for a SARC?

It remained uncertain how the proposed changes to the NHS and PCT provision would have an impact on support for a local SARC.

The Panel urged Worcestershire PCT to commit funding for a local SARC. It was felt that police encouragement for the increased

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 21 October 2010

reporting of cases of sexual violence would heighten the need for a local SARC.

Worcestershire PCT re-stated its commitment to supporting victims of sexual violence. Worcestershire PCT officers would investigate whether Inspector Vikki Reay's recent promotion at West Mercia Police might open up opportunities for the establishment of a SARC.

- 5) Is there anything further which you would like to add on behalf of the Worcestershire PCT regarding SARCs?

Worcestershire PCT officers felt that the development of an equivalent 'virtual SARC' in the form of the WRASAC was the appropriate course of action during a period when future funding for many NHS schemes could not be guaranteed. The Panel was subsequently asked to support the WRASAC by helping to raise its profile.

25. SARCS - CONCLUSIONS

The Chair clarified the process for the Panel to make recommendations.

The Panel discussed make appropriate recommendations regarding the possible introduction of a SARC in the West Mercia Police Force area.

RESOLVED that:

- a) **The Panel support Cllr Blagg in her forthcoming discussions with the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, Minister for Crime Prevention, regarding the future provision to support victims of sexual violence and the potential establishment of a SARC in the West Mercia Police area.**
- b) **The Panel issue a letter to the Community Safety Partnership expressing its concern regarding the impending demise of the Worcestershire PCT and the uncertainty over the possible establishment of a SARC in the West Mercia Police area, whilst pledging its support to the WRASAC and the Certificate of Stakeholder Agreement, with particular reference to paragraph three.**

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 21 October 2010

RECOMMENDED that:

The Panel recommend that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Council pledge their support for the establishment of a SARC in the West Mercia Police area via a letter to the Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board highlighting the current obstacles to establishing a SARC and the level of uncertainty for future provision of care to victims of sexual violence following the release of the NHS White Paper.

26. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair informed the Panel that Kate Ray, Alcohol Lead at the Worcestershire Drug and Alcohol Action Team, would deliver a presentation on alcohol related admissions to the Alexandra Hospital at the next Panel meeting on 20th January 2011. This was further to the suggestion of Cllr Anita Clayton made at the Panel meeting of 15th July 2010 upon the item 'Sustainable Communities Strategy Action Plan' that more information on alcohol related admissions be provided.

Cllr Sheila Blagg would provide a verbal update from the meeting to be held with James Brockenshire MP at the next meeting.

The next Panel meeting on 20th January 2011 would commence at 6.30pm.

RESOLVED that

the contents of the Panel's Work Programme be noted

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.30 pm