

HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel was held on Tuesday 8 December 2020.

PRESENT: Councillors J McTigue (Chair), D Coupe (Vice-Chair), B Cooper, A Hellaoui, B Hubbard, T Mawston, D Rooney, M Storey and P Storey

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: C Blair (Director Of Commissioning Strategy and Delivery) (TVCCG), D Tomlinson (Detective Chief Inspector) (Cleveland Police) and J Fidan

OFFICERS: C Breheny, M Adams, M Walker, D Cochrane, G Moore and S Blood

20/29 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

20/30 **MINUTES- HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL - 13 OCTOBER 2020**

The minutes of the Health Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 13 October 2020 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

20/31 **OPIOID DEPENDENCY - FURTHER EVIDENCE**

A number of representatives from Middlesbrough Council and Cleveland Police were in attendance at the meeting to provide information in respect of the panel's current review topic of Opioid Dependency: What happens next

The Head of Stronger Communities advised the panel that the Middlesbrough Community Safety Partnership was a statutory body made up of representatives from the Police, Probation Service, Local Authority, Youth Offending Service and the Fire and Rescue Authority and it produced a Community Safety Plan that was reviewed every two years.

The Community Safety Partnership plan identified the following priorities:

Priority 1—Perceptions and Feeling Safe

- We will aim to better understand and improve the public perception of safety and crime in Middlesbrough
- Tackling crime and ASB head on

Priority 2 - Tackling the Root Causes

- Adverse Experiences
- Trauma Informed approach

Priority 3 - Locality Working, Inc. Town Centre

- Reconfigure relationships between statutory organisations and the community. Encouraging and supporting a collaborative approach and building capacity within the community. Create a safe town centre environment to live, work and visit

It was explained that the Neighbourhood Safety Wardens in Middlesbrough have a significant role to play in identifying and engaging with vulnerable people and referring them to commissioned services. All of the Wardens carry naloxone kits, a drug that reverses the effects of an overdose. By administering the drug the Wardens, who are also trained in first aid, had saved the lives of 9 people in Middlesbrough since December 2019.

The Neighbourhood Safety Wardens, who were also accredited by the Chief Constable of Cleveland Police, regularly gathered intelligence and shared information with the Police relating to drug dealing so that appropriate action could be taken. This has resulted in drug raids taking place in a number of local communities.

The Council's Officers also regularly built a portfolio of evidence to support application to the

courts for house closures where there was evidence of Anti-Social Behaviour, crime and drug dealing from a property.

A couple of case studies detailing the support offered through a multi-agency approach were provided to the panel. The Head of Stronger Communities expressed the view that people did not choose to live a challenging life, they often found themselves in a situation that gradually crept up on them. Individual circumstances and life experiences could lead to people being in a certain environment that could lead to harmful behaviours. Every drug user was someone's brother, sister, mother, daughter, son and they deserved another chance and support to change their behavior when they were ready for it. If their behavior was causing harm to the community, they needed to understand that that it was not acceptable and their actions would have consequences. Enforcement did have a place too.

The Panel was advised that additional benefits would be derived from increased assertive outreach work to support people to make small, positive steps to changing behavior.

The Chief Inspector of Cleveland Police advised that following publication of the recent HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services report, which had highlighted serious concerns about Cleveland Police leaving vulnerable victims at risk there had been a significant culture change within the force, particularly in respect of Police understanding around the vulnerability of drug users and how people became dependent. In 2019/20 Cleveland Police had also led on the Heroin and Crack Cocaine Action Area (HCCAA) project.

The Chief Inspector explained that streamlined processes for dealing with possession of drugs were currently being considered. For example, if an individual was stopped with a very small amounts of drugs but there was no risk of threat or harm, procedures to interview them on body worn cameras and submit a streamlined case file outside the court process could be introduced. At the same time the individual concerned would be referred to the relevant support agency or to the local authority to help them to address their addiction issues rather than the case still being stuck in the court system three months down the line. As currently valuable visible police presence was being reduced by relatively low level offending.

The panel was informed that Cleveland Police was currently working with partners to divert people from heading into the criminal justice system by offering rehabilitation, rather than putting them through short-term custody sentences for drug possession. Healthcare professionals were employed as part of the custody and diversion team and would assist individuals who had some sort of drug dependency whether it be to opioids or prescribed medications.

In terms of partnership working it was explained that Cleveland Police's Neighbourhood Policing Team held 'threat, risk and harm meetings' on a daily basis with partners including the local authority, local housing providers and fire & rescue services to discuss crime, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and vulnerability. Many of the issues discussed were linked to drugs and alcohol and the majority of incidents reported to the Police were rooted in these issues. At present there were a significant number of reports around street dealing. It was emphasised that Cleveland Police would not tolerate dealers causing problems on the streets. The Police were also working alongside the Council to close down troublesome properties

In terms of harm reduction schemes it was explained that Cleveland Police had a number of schemes in place including:-

- Divert schemes to divert people from the criminal prosecution system to rehabilitation
- Young engagement meetings
- New programmes to educate school aged children to deliver a holistic approach to the danger of drugs

In terms of the enforcement work undertaken by Cleveland Police this currently yielded very little in terms of recovering Heroin. It would appear to be a generational change. Heroin was a dying drug in terms of the younger generation picking it up. However, Cleveland Police had seen an increase in the misuse and abuse of prescribed drugs and drugs imported over the internet including tablets, painkillers and sleeping tablets. People were also moving towards cocaine and crack cocaine.

AGREED that the information provided be considered as evidence in respect of the panel's current review on the topic of Opioid Dependency.

20/32

COVID-19 UPDATE

The Director of Public Health (South Tees) was in attendance to provide the Panel with an update in respect of COVID-19 and the local Public Health and NHS response. The Director advised that at the last Health Scrutiny Panel meeting, as held on 13 November 2020, the 7 day rolling average figure for the COVID-19 infection rate in Middlesbrough was 375 per 100,000 (5 November 2020). Today that rate had fallen to 188 per 100,000 (3 December 2020). Middlesbrough had closed the gap and the rates were very similar to those in the north of the region. It was advised that it was probable (based on the rates) that Middlesbrough was heading for Tier 3.

Reference was made to the percentage of people testing positive and it was advised that whereas previously this had been approximately 16 to 17 per cent of those tested that figure stood at 6.9 per cent. The number of people being tested had fallen and the number of cases being detected in those aged 60+ were largely driven by the testing taking place in Care Homes. The figures indicated that currently Ladgate Ward had the highest prevalence rate and this information would drive the authority's thinking around the lateral flow testing.

In terms of the hospital metrics the inpatient numbers at South Tees NHS Foundation Trust had been falling since 23 November 2020 and everyone was keen to see that decline continue. The number of new admissions in the last 7 days had fallen from 140 patients on 23 November to 75 patients on 7 December. The red line on the graph indicated the number of Covid-19 patients in critical care and this figure was 14 as of 8 December 2020. However, that number was starting to stabilise at quite a high level. The excess death figures highlighted the significant number of Covid-19 deaths in March, April and May. The Director of Public Health advised that he anticipated Middlesbrough would be placed in Tier 3.

In terms of testing it was advised that there were two testing different streams, one program came with a financial allocation and the Director of Public Health was working through how it could be undertaken most effectively. It was advised that after Christmas the Public Health Team was looking to introduce large testing sites in Middlesbrough Town Hall, with smaller sites at Middlesbrough Sports Village and out in the community. However, there remained a raft of detail that was yet to be determined.

Reference was made to the vaccinations, which had now received the necessary approval and so rollout could begin. The Director of Health advised that this was encouraging and did indicate that there was an end in sight. However, there was a long way to go to get everyone vaccinated and in the interim period there was a real need to ensure that everyone continued to follow the current guidance.

AGREED that the information provided be noted.

20/33

REGIONAL HEALTH SCRUTINY UPDATE

The Democratic Services Officer advised that at the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee held on 20 November 2020 the following items had been considered:-

- Local Covid Response – Presentation from the Director of Public Health for South Tees;
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust updates:-
 1. Teesside Rehabilitation Services Development Update
 2. Roseberry Park Remedial Works Update
 3. West Lane Hospital
- Work Programme and Future Meetings.

NOTED

20/34

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE

The Chair advised that the following matters had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 20 November:-

- The Call-In on Future Accommodation.

On 3 December, the Overview and Scrutiny Board had considered:-

- The Executive Forward Work Programme;
- Middlesbrough Council's Response to COVID-19;
- An Executive Member Update from the Executive Member for Environment;
- Updates from the Scrutiny Chairs.