

Notes of the quarterly meeting held with the Chair and Vice Chair of Health Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee and Tracey Shewan, Director of Communications and Corporate Services, Integrated Care Board.

Present: Councillors Ian Wilkes and Rupert Adcock, Denise French, Democratic Services, Tracey Shewan ICB

Covid update

Tracey updated that numbers were no longer being collected. There had been an increase in cases but this had now plateaued. There had been an increase in hospital in patients with Covid and mask wearing in public areas had been reintroduced. Covid booster vaccine uptake was going well. There was also a drive to increase uptake of the flu jab. There were increased calls to 111 and GP out of hours regarding flu and respiratory illnesses. It was not known how many unvaccinated patients were in hospital; patients were often admitted for something else and then found to have Covid or it may have been caught in hospital.

A bigger impact of Covid was the impact on staff absence. Staff were still testing twice weekly and lateral flow tests were free for those who had to test for work.

Social care

There was still some pressure on ambulance turnarounds at hospitals.

There were challenges with patients who were fit for discharge from hospital but were unable to access a care package. The NHS provided 6 weeks of reablement through its Home First package for patients with complex needs upon discharge but there were resourcing issues. The care home sector had ongoing recruitment issues for various reasons including lower wages and the impact of the cost of living crisis which could make jobs outside the sector more attractive. There were also issues when Care Home staff caught Covid and had to self-isolate.

Staffing

There were NHS staffing schemes including one for staff who had retired but were willing to come back to work part time. There was also a reservist list for professional staff to provide additional hours when resource was challenged, with refresher training provided.

The County Council's Scrutiny Committee on 17 October had received a detailed presentation on workforce.

Drug Issues

The Police had run a campaign about Monkey Dust and the hospital had experienced some patient admissions due to the effects of the drug.

Mental Health

There were increasing issues with mental health problems. The cost of living crisis was contributing to this and there was concern that people may not come forward for the help they needed. There was concern around using unsafe methods of heating

which could lead to fire risk or carbon monoxide poisoning due to lack of ventilation. There were sources of help and information available and health partners would be working with local councils and the fire service and others to ensure relevant communications were sent out.

Access

There were challenges to accessing primary care. There would be a report to an upcoming meeting of the County Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on access to general practice.

There continued to be promotion of the use of 111 as a first resort rather than going to A&E; 111 was available on line or on the phone. People who arrived at Royal Stoke Hospital A&E may be directed to a 111 kiosk in the first instance.

Falls

The hospitals were seeing more cases of falls injury. Home assistance was available to assess trip hazards. Information on toolkits was available including on social media where it was often picked up by families who would then use the information to help their older family member. It was important to target any written information to high density locations to reach those who needed the information such as at supermarkets or takeaway outlets.