

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Health & Wellbeing Board – 3rd December 2014

Question from Mr Barber, Southend Homeless Action Network

Given the many instances that those of us who work among rough sleepers, many of which have mental health issues, have come across where help has been limited and hampered because of an absence of mental health services, what steps are being taken to remedy this situation?

Answer

There has been progress in tackling the issue of homelessness across Southend, which we know has many negative effects on local individuals, families and communities.

Mental health services are available to everyone in Southend, including those who are homeless or sleeping rough. In 2012, as part of the Homeless Health Needs Audit we asked homeless people what support they would like for their mental health. They reported a range of services would be useful - from talking therapies through to practical help for day-to-day life.

We currently have a range of services to support the mental health of those who are sleeping rough in Southend-on-Sea including:

- Primary care services for vulnerable people, including rough sleepers with no fixed address, are provided by Victoria Surgery.
- Supported housing services for people whose primary needs concern their mental health are provided by Richmond Fellowship and delivered at four separate locations in the borough.
- Floating support, including crisis work, to supported housing schemes via the Southend Access Point is provided by Family Mosaic.
- In recognition of the fact that homelessness and mental health often co-exist, staff at most services are trained in mental health awareness.
- Over the last few years additional resources and training have been offered to the Churches Winter Night Shelter.

We continue to work hard to prevent homelessness and support individuals who are or may become homeless through the Homelessness Prevention Strategy (2014-2017). In particular, this strategy outlines our commitment to minimise rough sleeping and improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of homeless people through partnership working across Southend-on-Sea.

Question from Mr Ali to the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board

Weight Management Services

Southend Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is working with six other CCGs across Essex to commission (buy) a Specialist Weight Management Service.

Currently there are four levels (known as tiers) of services offering help and support to people with obesity in Essex. The layers of services looks like this, with Tier 1 being fairly low-level intervention (reinforcing healthy eating messages etc.) through to Tier 4 which is for a major intervention i.e. weight loss surgery (bariatric surgery)

Within Southend, the first two tiers of services are commissioned and managed by the Public Health Team in Southend Borough Council.

Please could the Health and Wellbeing Board provide details of the health services being commissioned by Southend Council's Public Health Team to offer help and support to people with obesity in Southend that are identified to be in Tiers 1 and 2 showing the measures being taken to ensure these services are of good quality, safe and easily accessible?

Answer:

The Public Health Team in Southend-on-Sea Borough Council commissions a range of Tier 1 and Tier 2 services for the management of overweight and obesity.

The Tier 1 service includes a Health Trainer service which is provided by Parkwood Healthcare. This provides one-to-one behaviour change support for a range of lifestyle behaviours, including goal setting around healthy eating, physical activity and weight management.

This service is based on a nationally evaluated model; all health trainers and volunteers are accredited and have a behaviour change qualification. Residents are able to self-refer to this service.

The other Tier 1 provision that is not commissioned but supported by Public Health, includes the Exercise on Referral scheme. This is a 12 week programme delivered by qualified instructors at the Southend Leisure and Tennis Centre. This scheme is monitored against a National Quality Assurance Framework for exercise referral programmes.

The current Tier 2 services include:

- A "Gateway" provided by Parkwood Healthcare. The Gateway provides an initial assessment, motivational interviewing and goal setting and helps the client to choose the most appropriate Tier 2 service to attend. The Gateway follows up the client on completion of their programme to encourage continued weight reduction or weight maintenance

- Three Tier 2 providers: Active Life for a Healthier You,
MoreLife
Slimming World

The three options provide choice and enables clients to access the most appropriate service for them. Each of these services meets the NICE Guidelines for Tier 2 provision. All Tier 2 services require referral by a healthcare professional.

Tier 1 and 2 services are monitored by Southend Public Health Team to ensure performance against the service specification, which require all services to have appropriate quality, safety and access standards.

Questions from Mr Gordon Barton & Mrs Alison Barton & Ms Sharon Diack in respect to Mental Health Therapy Resource Service to the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board

Question from Mr Barton/Mrs Barton

We understand that Southend Council has passed a budget As part of that budget, funding for staff positions for those whose roles are supporting those with Mental Health disorders is to be significantly reduced.

Our understanding is between 6-9 positions are being cut.

We are concerned at those cuts particularly as mental ill health accounts for 28% of the total burden of disease but only 13% of the NHS funding.

Please can you explain why these roles have targeted and how Southend is intending to meet its duty of care obligations?

Question from Ms Sharon Diack

I am currently a service user with Mental Health Therapy Service which is run from the SEPT office in London Road Westcliff On Sea Essex.

I have been a service user for a number of years now and currently attend groups on a Tuesday and Friday, I also attend a swimming group on a Wednesday. I find these 'groups' invaluable to me and keeping my mental health on an even keel.

Recently it has come to my attention that Southend Borough Council are getting rid of 6 members of staff, 1 of which had already decided to retire. The staff in question were only recently told of the decision even though I have heard that it was made last October. The service users have NOT officially been told that the services/groups that we attend and are staffed by said staff will be ending either! Some mental health users, myself included do NOT adjust to change and loss very well so I feel this has been badly managed!

Apparently they are going to bring in SDS (Self Directed Support) for every service user that meets the criteria of needing it. The ones, like myself, who are not deemed

to be too unwell and are managing their mental health problems will NOT meet the criteria, therefore, not get any SDS, which will leave them and myself without ANY support. The reason I personally manage my mental health is through using the services I currently receive 'My Groups' as I call them. Without those I would most definitely struggle and who knows what might happen. If I got that bad to warrant another hospital admission, where would I be placed? There has been a ward at Rochford and a ward in Basildon that have already been closed, so with less wards and less services/groups what will happen?

The Council have said that this has been done to save £250.000, at what cost though? I can assure you that if this plan does go ahead it will end up costing a hell of a lot more than what they are trying to save!

Answer

As Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board I have been clear on my views that I want to see improvements to Mental Health being given a high priority and I would therefore never endorse any changes that would reduce the quality of any Mental Health Services in Southend.

I would also like to clarify that the decision was made at full Council on 26th February 2015 and not in October 2014. Staff were informed prior to the Council meeting and weekly meetings have taken place with them since the decision was made. Of the 6 staff within the current service who are employed by the Council and have been seconded to South Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT) for sometime, one is due to retire. The Council working with SEPT will be looking to redeploy the remaining staff wherever possible. Planning for the transition from the Resource Therapy service to other services is currently underway and communication with service users and carers will be made available shortly.

This decision was made in the context of the Council having to make savings of £11.7m this year and over £51m over the last five years due to central government cuts. The number of Council employees over this period has substantially reduced. In these circumstances no area of the council's work has remained unaffected by cuts.

Following the approval of the Mental Health strategy for South Essex in 2013 and the impending introduction of the Care Act, the way mental health services are provided need to change to give individuals more control and choice over what support they feel will best meet their needs. This will help to promote an individual's recovery through a more personalised approach and support.

To achieve this health bodies and local authorities have had to review how they commission and fund mental health services locally. There is a need to move away from restrictive and defined 'block' contracted services that are offered to 'groups' of people, to much more personalised care and support through the use of individual personal budgets and direct payments which give more choice, control and flexibility to the individual over the support they feel they need.

The Resource Therapy Service is a block contracted service and with many more individuals now choosing the alternative of personal budgets, such block, contracted services are no longer viable or desirable as a first option to many people.

I want to be very clear that the changes to resource therapy do not represent a reduction in Mental Health Services nor are they a reflection on the excellent services that have been provided by dedicated staff in the past. The proposed changes are as a result of the way individuals are now choosing to have their identified support needs met, and a result of feedback from people that use the services.

All of the individuals who have previously received services from resource therapy will continue to have their needs met either through a personal budget coupled with any additional healthcare they may require from the Community Mental Health Team. This includes the Occupational Therapy staff in the team who have been delivering resource therapy services to date. All those who need the support service will still receive it in the future.

This is not a cut in provision as individuals with mental health needs will continue to have a package of care and support as required to meet their individual needs, but delivered in a more personalised way and not via a 'block' contracted service.

I have also promised to meet with the employees involved in these changes and seek to address any concerns that they may have.