

**Director of Public Health**

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Ward(s)</b>
Health and Care Scrutiny Committee	21 <sup>st</sup> January 2021		All

<b>Delete as appropriate</b>	<b>Exempt</b>	<b>Non-exempt</b>

**SUBJECT: WORKING WITH ISLINGTON RESIDENTS WHO NEED SUPPORT WITH THEIR DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE DURING COVID**

## **1 Synopsis**

- 1.1 This paper and the accompanying presentation provides an update on the local adult drug and alcohol recovery service, Better Lives.
- 1.2 Of particular focus in this report is the service response in continuing to provide critical support to drug and alcohol users during the Covid pandemic.
- 1.3 The provider of Islington’s integrated drug and alcohol recovery service is Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, in partnership with Humankind (formerly Blenheim CDP) and Westminster Drug Project.
- 1.4 The service has been operational from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 To note the complexities of delivering critical services during a pandemic and the service’s response in meeting the needs of residents throughout this period.

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 Islington experiences some of the greatest levels of substance misuse (alcohol and drugs) related harm in London. Substance misuse has significant detrimental impacts on health

services, crime and community safety and is an important contributor to adult and children's social care needs, as well as having wider economic, employment and societal impacts.

- 3.2 Better Lives, Islington's adult drug and alcohol recovery services, has been operational since April 2018 following a major 18-month re-design and transformation programme. The vision and operating model for the new service aligns closely with Islington Council's corporate plan, and specifically the development of integrated, place-based working in localities focused on tackling the deeper social challenges that prevent residents from fulfilling their potential, improving outcomes for themselves and their families.
- 3.3 Islington's priorities for the drug and alcohol treatment system are: to continue to improve recovery outcomes for both service users and their families; increase uptake of the most appropriate treatment for those who need it; and ensure that treatment pathways meet the changing needs of the population of drug and alcohol users.
- 3.4 During covid lockdown, the initial focus of support was on ensuring that residents could access, or continue to access, the critical elements of their care. Assessments were carried out by phone and in person, with the necessary PPE safety measures in place.
- 3.5 Post lockdown, it was possible to offer other types of remote support including online groups and online key-working. There was a delay in offering online groups during lockdown while the appropriate platforms were developed and staff were trained to facilitate virtual groups. By the end of September, a number of on-line groups were available to service users including mindfulness, support for sobriety and relapse prevention. The service has been working hard to re-instate as much face-to-face provision as possible, although these activities have to be carefully managed so that social distancing can be maintained in buildings, and consideration will be given to the newest lockdown measures before further face-to-face support is offered.
- 3.6 Next steps are being planned but it has been difficult to sustain progress due to the changing nature of the pandemic.  
These steps include:
  - Planning for further waves of covid
  - Ensuring that all critical face to face interventions are reinstated safely and as soon as possible. These include drug screening; blood borne virus screening
  - Provider led workstreams on lessons learnt and to develop new ways of working post covid.

## **4 Implications**

### **4.1 Financial implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report. Comments provided by Tom Cooksey.

### **4.2 Legal implications**

No legal implications as this complies with the local authority duties under the Care Act 2014. Comments provided by Anuara Ali, Community Services Solicitor (Solicitor-Advocate).

### **4.2 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

As this is an update report with no decisions being made, there are no new environmental implications beyond those identified when the service commenced (energy and water use, purchasing and waste generation in the buildings being used).

#### 4.3 Resident Impact Assessment

A resident impact assessment was completed as part of the procurement process.

### 5 Conclusion and reason for recommendation

- 5.1 The anticipated positive impacts of Better Lives and the new service model it is delivering are starting to emerge, following a challenging first year of operation.
- 5.2 Work continues with Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, and strongly involving people who use the service, to continue to develop Better Lives

#### Appendices

- Presentation: 2021 – Maintaining support for residents affected by drug and alcohol misuse throughout the Covid pandemic
- Appendix to presentation: supporting information

#### Final report clearance:

##### Signed by:



Director of Public Health

Date: 12/01/2021

##### Received by:

Head of Democratic Services

Date:

##### Report Author:

Emma Stubbs

Date: 12/01/2021

Tel: 020 7527 8198

Email: [Emma.stubbs@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Emma.stubbs@islington.gov.uk)

#### Financial Implications

**Author:** Thomas Cooksey

Tel: 020 7527 1867

Email: [Thomas.Cooksey@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Thomas.Cooksey@islington.gov.uk)

Date: 12/01/2021

#### Legal Implications

**Author:** Anuara Ali

Tel: 020 7527 3122

Email: [Anuara.Ali@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Anuara.Ali@islington.gov.uk)

Date: 12/01/2021