

Director of Public Health

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Health and Care Scrutiny Committee	16 th December 2021		All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt

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 impact of covid, learning from the changes made to service delivery due to the pandemic, new investment in drug and alcohol services and the key priorities for next 12 months.
- 1.3 The provider of Islington’s integrated drug and alcohol recovery service is Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, in partnership with Humankind and Westminster Drug Project.
- 1.4 The service has been operational since 1st April 2018.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the ongoing learning from covid, the limitations of service delivery created by the pandemic, and the priorities for the service in the next 12 months which aim to address some of the identified limitations.

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 and support 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 the initial lockdown periods, the initial focus of support was on ensuring that residents could access, or continue to access, the critical elements of their care. The service is now working towards reinstating as much face-to-face support as possible, while ensuring that infection control and prevention measures are followed to ensure the safety of staff and service users, in line with NHS guidelines and procedures.

3.5 The on-going learning from the response to Covid has identified both challenges and opportunities. There have been challenges or limitations in service delivery including: lack of face-to-face support; partnership working with Primary Care and Acute Trusts has been more challenging whilst these sectors have needed to prioritise Covid care and have also faced their own impacts; a significant increase in the number, and complexity, of people under the care of the service, linked especially to the 'Everyone In' initiative; an increase in reported drug and alcohol related deaths; feelings of social isolation and loneliness have increased, adversely impacting on motivation levels and lack of access to other community based support services; and it has been generally much more difficult to access or engage with those other aspects of social capital and other aspects of everyday life which support people to sustain their recovery.

3.6 But the pandemic has also created opportunities: service users have benefitted from having more responsibility and control of when they collect medication; the "Everyone In" initiative demonstrated how true partnership working can achieve important outcomes, with a significant increase in engagement with drug and alcohol services among people who had been street homeless. This has led to substance misuse services and their partners exploring ways in which support can be offered in a more multi-disciplinary way. There has been an increased focus on better supporting people who experience multiple disadvantage with a shift towards services being able to deliver support using trauma informed approaches.

3.7 The service has identified a number of priorities for the next 12 months including:

- Targeting priority groups e.g. opiate users who also use alcohol
- Implement learning from covid / recovery planning
- Develop systems and partnerships to address co-morbid trauma and mental ill-health in people who use substances

- Deep dive review of deaths in treatment in order to identify any actions for improvement
- Address recruitment, retention and well-being of the workforce
- Review and respond to recommendations in Dame Carol Black's national independent review of drugs

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).

4.3 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).

4.4 Resident Impact Assessment

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

5 Conclusion and reason for recommendation

- 5.1 The learning from covid continues to be a "working progress" but a number of priority areas have already been identified and officers will continue to work with Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, and the people who use the service, to further develop Better Lives and adapting its response to the pandemic.

Appendices

- Presentation: December 2021 – Supporting Islington Residents Who Need Support With Their Drug And Alcohol Use
- Appendix to presentation: supporting information

Final report clearance:

Signed by: Jonathan O Sullivan

Director of Public Health

Date: 1st December 2021

Received by:

Head of Democratic Services

Date:

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Financial Implications

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Legal Implications

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