

LDS/24/35
Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee
23 September 2024

Integrated Adult Social Care Customer Feedback

Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services

22 July 2024 Standing Overview Group, Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendations

- (i) That Integrated Adult Social Care (IASC) complaint response time targets are closely monitored and included in an annual report to the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee.
- (ii) That the data collection process for IASC compliments is reviewed.

Aim of the Session

Officers from IASC and Customer Relations provided a presentation to the Standing Overview Group on 22 July 2024. This session was aimed at helping:

1. Members understand the various mechanisms in IASC to gain and act on feedback.
2. Members gain a better understanding of the lived experience of people using services in Devon.
3. Members to check IASC are identifying and acting on recurring themes.
4. Members to ask questions and explore how this session might influence their work programme.

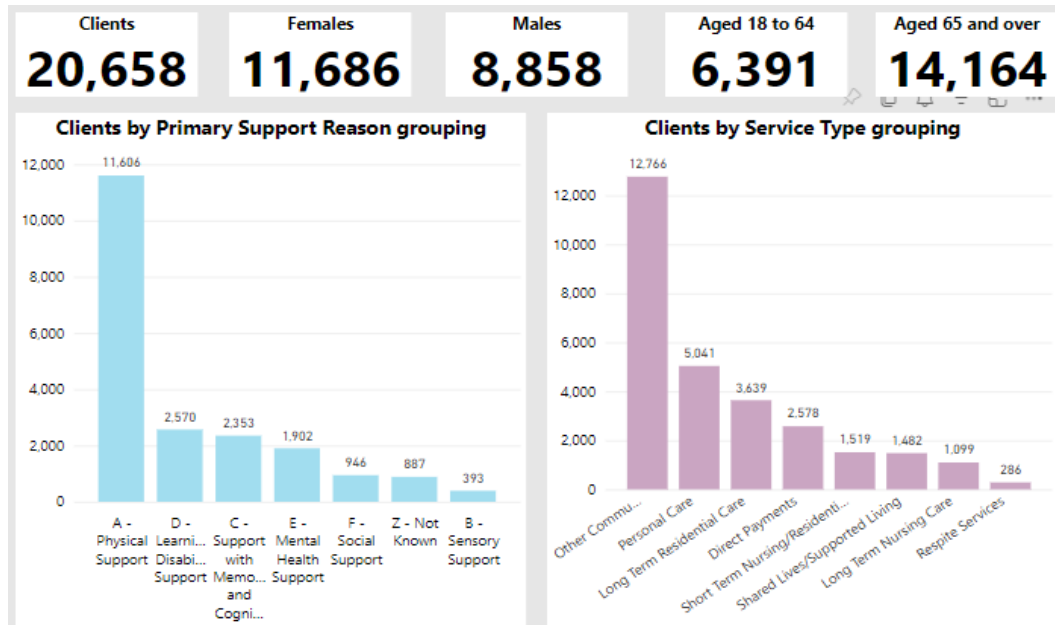
The following Members attended:

- Cllr Sara Randall Johnson (Chair)
- Cllr Jess Bailey
- Cllr Carol Whitton
- Cllr Phil Bullivant (Cabinet Member)

Overview of Presentation to Members

IASC Customer Feedback Overview

The number of people IASC serve in a year:



User and Carer Involvement

Adult Social Care engagement within Devon County Council is co-ordinated by the Involvement Team, based within Adult Social Care Commissioning. Local engagement partners who provide regular insight into lived experience of people receiving IASC support include:

- Living Options Devon
- Age UK Devon
- Devon People First
- Dimensions for Autism
- Hikmat Devon CIC and Plymouth & Devon Racial Equality Council
- Devon Carers

IASC enable people who receive adult social care support and those with Equality Act characteristics to help shape strategy, policy, practice, accessibility, systems and processes whenever possible.

The accessibility of assessments for people with a learning disability have been improved by members of the Learning Disability Partnership Board's Health & Social Care Discussion Group, including the introduction of documentation in easy-read formats.

People with a learning disability have also discussed the reasonable adjustments required to make the review process more user-friendly for them, enabling them to participate more meaningfully in their review and so improve the promotion of choice and control.

The review of Community Services has included the co-production of standards and expectations. Co-production involved service users and carers, and independent providers in the same group.

The change in front door call-handling from Care Direct, within the wider Customer Service Centre, to Care Direct Plus was subject to rigorous service user and carer feedback from Living Options Devon, Age UK and Devon Carers, their feedback has resulted in changes to the system to mitigate barriers to

access. Living Options 'mystery shopping' activities are ongoing to monitor the effectiveness of adult social care public call-handling.

Concerns raised by Carer Ambassadors over lack of suitable housing support for people with complex needs have been raised with District Councils and are informing local housing development strategies.

Complaints

- Complaints about Adult Social Care are resolved via a one stage statutory process.
- Dissatisfied complainants can approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) who may choose to investigate further.
- These statutory requirements include the production of an annual report.
- Over 200 complaints were investigated in 2023-24, matched by a similar number of recorded compliments.
- These are spread geographically and mainly concern operational care management services.
- Independent and voluntary sector providers of adult social care have their own complaints processes.
- 45% of complaints investigated in 2023-24 were upheld in full or part.
- 50% of complaints were responded to in target timescales.
- There were far more complaints about the quality of service provided in 2022-23 (33%) than in 2023-24 (14%).
- There were far more complaints about delays in the service provided in 2023-24 (25%) than in 2022-23 (10%).
- Issues with communications, delays in service, and the quality of services were the most common themes in 2023-24.
- For every fully or partially upheld complaint the investigating officer completes an action plan, so that actions and wider learning are recorded and evidenced.
- The Customer Relations Team monitor the implementation of agreed actions.
- There were 24 complaints received by LGSCO in 2023-24 compared with 10 in 2022-23.
- There were no public reports issued by LGSCO against IASC in 2023-24.

Compliments

- While some services are active in recording compliments about services and staff, Adult Social Care acknowledged that there is a need to do more to promote this and take positive learning from compliments.
- The Social Care Reablement Team is particularly active in recording compliments.
- Generally, compliments are made about staff in care giving roles rather than those in care management or commissioning.
- IASC are looking at options to enable people who receive services to record comments that are neither complaints nor compliments to help us learn and improve.

ASCS 2023-24 Survey of Adult Social Care Service Users

1,364 surveys distributed in Devon, with 475 responses.

- Devon is almost certain to remain at or above national, regional and comparator benchmarks against the majority of the responses received.
- The only area identified as being potentially at or below national, regional and comparator benchmarks related to the proportion of people who uses services who feel safe. Provisional results for 2023-24 indicate a slight worsening from 70.0% to 69.7%, although the long-term trend is upwards.
- Responses to this question are influenced by many factors beyond the social care services that people receive.

SACE 2023-24 Survey of Unpaid Carers in Devon

1,000 surveys distributed in Devon, with 462 responses.

- The national and local results for the 2023-24 survey of unpaid carers have been published.
- While the quality of life of unpaid carers in Devon improved marginally, it remains low in the 3rd quartile. Devon also remains below the national, regional and comparator benchmarks.
- Although there has been a marginal improvement in the latest survey, Devon continues to perform in the fourth quartile for carer social contact. Devon also remains below the national, regional and comparator benchmarks.
- There has been a marked decline over the last decade beginning before and continuing during the pandemic.
- Carer social contact is acknowledged area for improvement with a focus on providing breaks to carers.
- Despite less than good performance in other areas, carers in Devon continue to express levels of satisfaction with social services that border the first quartile and have improved over the last 5 surveys. Devon also remains above the national, regional and comparator benchmarks.
- This may reflect the services the people they care for receive, not just those they receive themselves.
- Devon has been on a long-term downward trend in the proportion of people who say they have been involved with the care management of the person they care for.
- This decline may in part reflect the separate arrangements for supporting people and their carers, the latter being via a commissioned arrangement.
- At 66.7% this is now just in the second quartile at the national average but below regional and comparator benchmarks.

Questions from SACE survey of carers used by CQC in inspection

- A mixed picture; IASC perform better than regional and national in 9 of 18 indicators.
- This adds to the picture that carers in Devon lack social contact, not having time for themselves, and are more time pressured in their caring role than is typical elsewhere.
- However, far more feel supported and more have access to breaks, especially longer breaks and breaks at short notice.
- Overall satisfaction with social services is also high.
- While access to information and advice is below benchmark those saying the information they do access is useful is above the benchmark.
- This presents officers with a paradox – what IASC are directly responsible for is rated better than elsewhere, but carers still feel under more pressure than elsewhere.
- This is not just a challenge for IASC it is a question for the Council and its partners.

People who find it easy to find information about support

- Provisional results for 2023-24 indicate a significant worsening from 69.6% to 66.2%, after 3 years of improvement.
- This may take Devon below national, regional and comparator benchmarks and into the 3rd quartile.
- A similar indicator for unpaid carers has also declined indicating common issues that need to be addressed.

Issues Identified by Members

During discussion with Members the following issues were identified:

Engagement Sessions

Most IASC public engagement sessions are held on Teams and while the numbers have risen officers are planning to hold some in person meetings in the Autumn. Members noted it can be a different dynamic meeting in person and were concerned that issues with broadband access in some parts of the County might limit the number of people able to attend these engagement sessions.

Ombudsman Complaints

There was a significantly higher number of LGSCO complaints received in 23-24 (24) compared to 22-23 (10). Officers were not able to identify why there had been a rise in these but it is likely the Ombudsman office may have had some delays. These complaints were not about one particular operational issue but were quite disparate issues. The LGSCO closed 11 complaints regarding IASC in 23-24 (18 in 22-23) and of those 6 were upheld (7 in 22-23) which related to:

- 2 on care homes,
- 1 on partner organisations
- 1 safeguarding with multi organisations
- 1 finance related
- 1 was around care management in terms of a reduction in a care package

Learning from Complaints

Work is ongoing to learn from complaints received and this needs to be further encouraged. There is however a difference to where a concern is expressed, to the progressing of a formal complaint. Carer support plans will capture where people are unhappy, and where issues cannot be resolved people are offered the opportunity to make a formal complaint. Others come through directly to Healthwatch or their MP for instance. These are small numbers compared to those in the wider system. Every Ombudsman complaint upheld has an action plan as to what needs to happen both from an individual team and service perspective. Where staff have made a mistake, managers need to look at guidance and training and learn from the mistakes. Focussing on the delivery of the action plan is paramount.

Complaint Response Times

Officers described issues with complaint response times which they are working to address. Where there is a live and active issue, IASC will prioritise their response.

Benchmarking Data

There is no organised customer feedback benchmarking data as this is captured differently by each local authority. Officers do not however think that the County Council is in an outlier.

Compliments

There is a need to encourage more compliments and better record these. Staff should provide this feedback to the Customer Relations Team as it is not always being passed on. Officers advised that most compliments are likely to relate to reablement.

Unpaid Carers

There is a need to continue to improve the Devon offer to unpaid carers. Officers recognised the work with carers as amongst the most important things the County Council does. This will be a focus of CQC in terms of impact and how IASC intervenes.

Conclusion

Members thanked officers for organising the IASC Customer Feedback presentation to their Standing Overview Group meeting. Members welcomed the level of detail that was provided to them and the objective appraisal of the issues surrounding customer feedback.

Members noted that learning from both complaints and compliments remains an area for development. Efforts are improving, but IASC needs to ensure there is a robust approach to gathering and processing customer feedback. This is essential in providing high quality services and care to the people of Devon.

Options / Alternatives

The report is the summary of a Standing Overview Group meeting of Members of the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee. Scrutiny does not make decisions and this report does not propose any alternatives.

Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

As above, there are no specific considerations in regard to consultations, representations and technical data in this report.

Strategic Plan

The alignment of all Scrutiny activity with the Strategic Plan is detailed on the Scrutiny work programme. The issues raised in the report and the benefit of developing Member knowledge and the 'critical friend' challenge of Scrutiny contribute to the Council achieving its strategic plan. Improving Member knowledge on key issues contributes to the Council's commitment to being a trust, inclusive and innovative Council. It ensures good decision making and that the Council listens and learns.

Financial Considerations

There are no specific financial considerations in this report.

Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations in this report.

Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

There are no specific environmental impact considerations in this report.

Equality Considerations

There are no specific equality considerations in this report.

Risk Management Considerations

The activity of Scrutiny Members contributes to the mitigations for:

Ineffective Member Scrutiny defined as: 'Due to ineffective scrutiny, the level and quality of service management may drop, leading to financial mismanagement or harm to staff and/or citizens and reputational damage e.g. Grenfell.

Member effectiveness defined as: 'Inadequate member effectiveness due to a lack of training, support and knowledge leads to a lack of challenge to corporate officers and/or poor decision making, resulting in a negative effect on the County's citizens (poor value for money, poor service delivery, harm, etc).

Electoral Divisions: All

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers - Nil