

Report to February 26th Meeting of CBC Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Summary of January 11th 2024 Meeting of GCC Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This was a joint meeting with the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee. A full recording is available at the "Online meetings" section of the GCC website. The public information pack which includes all 4 power point presentations is also available on this website as is the agenda which includes the 2 'for information' items in full. The minutes are not yet available, so this paper is based solely on notes I took at the time.

1. Scrutiny Items

1.1 Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Strategy Annual Update 2024

The report provided a review of the progress made within each of the seven priorities outlined in the Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing 2020-2030 Strategy. Those areas being:

- Physical Activity
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Mental Wellbeing
- Social Isolation and Loneliness
- Healthy Weight
- Best Start in Life
- Housing and health

The committee received five 20-30 minute presentations the slides from which are well worth a look if you have time. I couldn't possibly do them justice here. I would particularly recommend looking at the work being done in the area of children suffering from traumatic experiences (ACEs) and the healthy lifestyles update looking at the obesity issues which are particularly prevalent in our more deprived communities. During this update I have to report that one County Councillor announced that food banks were 'surely no longer needed'!

1.2 Building Back Better and Gloucestershire's Levelling Up Together Grant Scheme

This grant scheme aims to address 'challenging and changing geographical inequality in the UK, through investment and new infrastructure to allow everyone the opportunity to flourish'.

52 schemes were awarded a total of £1.47M. It's good to note that CBH were awarded money to run engagement workshops and an award was made to the Springbank food pantry which no doubt has been put to very good use.

I'm sure most would have few criticisms of the intention of all the schemes that received money and applaud the good work that they have done but I would have also welcomed some analysis of those schemes/ projects that didn't get awards and what issues have failed to be addressed because money had not been made available to them.

Perhaps inevitably it's a very positive, good news report but for me the bigger issue is the merit, or otherwise of allocating public money in this way, what funding reductions have local authorities suffered to create such pots of money and the huge shortfall in funding that local authorities now have in general in dealing with issues that the 52 schemes seek to address.

2. Information Items – see for full details:

2.1 NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Health System (GICS) Performance Report

The report on urgent and emergency care presented a broadly improving picture but only covered the period to 10th December. A verbal update from the Chief Exec of the ICB indicated that arrangements made to cover the traditionally difficult Christmas and New Year period including, in this case the 6-day strike by junior doctors had prevented the system becoming overwhelmed despite 138 admissions on Christmas day (far more than usual) with only 35 discharges.

However, performance against elective care targets worsened with 79,669 now waiting for an appointment, 38 of whom have been waiting over 78 weeks.

Waiting times for cancer care remain disappointingly poor. 1 in 10 patients given an urgent 2 week wait referral by their GP were not seen by a specialist within the required time frame. A similar ratio of patients with a confirmed cancer diagnosis were not treated within the required 31-day timeframe. But perhaps most disappointing was the performance against the 62-day target for the commencement of treatment for patients referred urgently and who are subsequently confirmed as having cancer. Only 60.3% of those on that pathway met the 62-day standard compared with the target of 85%. There may be good clinical reasons why 10 to 15% should not be treated this quickly but for the remaining 20 to 25% my understanding is that this delay potentially worsens their outcome. The ICB report puts the blame on doctors striking. My view is that this is, at best, an over-simplification.

Primary Care saw a record 455,526 patients in October 2023, the latest month for which complete figures were available at the time the report was written. Despite seeing this large number of patients Gloucestershire had the worst percentage in the country (14.6%) of patients waiting over 28 days for a GP appointment.

2.2 NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB) Update

This report contains a commissioner update from the ICB (P. 105 of agenda pack), a report from the ICB about primary care (P. 111) and updates from local NHS providers, the Hospitals Trust (GHT) (P. 114), the Health and Care Services Trust (GHC) (PP. 117), the Ambulance Trust (SWAST) (P.119) and Practice Plus Group (PPG) (P.120).