

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 27 June 2023

By: Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Title: 'What matters to you', an adult social care strategy for East Sussex

Purpose: To outline the work conducted to develop an adult social care strategy for East Sussex and seek approval from Cabinet to launch and implement the proposed strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1 Note the six priorities in the strategy, which outline what is most important to adults who need care and support in East Sussex, their unpaid carers, and families.**
- 2 Approve the strategic response to the six priorities, as set out in our 'we will' statements,**
- 3 Approve the contents of the strategy publication and the proposal to launch the strategy in June 2023.**

1 Background

1.1 Together with our residents and partners, the Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) department has developed an adult social care strategy for the county. The strategy is specific to East Sussex, providing a person-centred framework that gives direction for staff and services. The strategy will be launched in June 2023 and seeks to improve understanding of what adult social care offers, reaching a wide range of stakeholders using plain and accessible language.

1.2 In 2022 it was agreed that an adult social care strategy should be developed. There is currently no overarching adult social care strategy for East Sussex and has not been in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted adult social care and dominated the way it was planned and delivered for two years. Now is a good time to build on existing local strategies and plans for health and social care and set out a clear strategy which outlines a set of long-term priorities for adult social care.

1.3 In late 2021 the Government published details of its vision and associated reforms for adult social care in [People at the Heart of Care](#). This included a set of charging reforms (now delayed to 2025) and a new requirement for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to assess local authority duties linked to adult social care (some inspections expected from September 2023, most from April 2024 onwards). Our strategy will help us describe and deliver local plans to align adult social care to the national vision, such as how we enable independence, and offer tailored and accessible care and support. It will also build on our work to date in preparing for reform, and enhance our response to CQC assurance, outlining how the needs of local people inform local services and our plans to develop care and support through co-productive relationships with residents.

2 Supporting information

2.1 We wanted our strategy to be driven by what people told us were their priorities, rather than what professionals might think people need. We wanted to know what was important to our residents, including people who draw on care and support, their unpaid carers, and families. We also wanted to reach people who may need care and support in the future, or those who need help now but may not be getting it for a range of reasons. An overview and timeline of our engagement and development plan is available in Appendix 1.

2.2 Throughout the process, a group of 16 residents that we refer to as our 'Citizens' Panel' has been involved in helping us to design and work up the strategy and their support has been invaluable. The panel will also work with us beyond the launch of this strategy, to guide its delivery and review the impact of the changes this strategy delivers, holding us to account.

2.3 Our 'listening' started in the form of surveys: 'Living Well in East Sussex' which ran across the summer of 2022 and was available online, on paper, in Easy Read and in several languages. We knew that some people would be unable or unwilling to complete a written survey and so we asked some residents our survey questions through one-to-one interviews (using interpreters where required). Running in tandem to our public survey was 'Listening to You', a survey which goes out to people and their unpaid carers who have recently had an assessment or review with the ASCH department.

2.4 With the help of local community organisations and groups, we took surveys and interviews out to places and people we don't regularly hear from, those we might consider seldom heard. In developing our strategy around the needs of local people, we wanted to hear from a wide range of people, views and experiences, prioritising the breadth of voices who shape the strategy, over the quantity. By focussing on engaging a wide range of views, we believe our strategy has been better able to represent the breadth of people who need care and support – those accessing adult social care, those who may need it in the future, and seldom heard groups.

2.5 In order to connect with people considered seldom heard by adult social care, we worked with colleagues within ASCH and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to utilise communication channels, organisations, community spaces or events that could help us reach and engage them. This included:

- Face-to-face survey interviews with homeless people conducted by Seaview and Warming up the Homeless.
- Promoting our surveys through community events hosted by VCSE organisations, for example a Diversity Resource International event attended by people or groups linked to ethnic minorities.
- Asking young people (aged 14-19) our survey questions through group discussions arranged by East Sussex County Council (ESCC)'s Children's Services Department.
- Approaching people in libraries attending IT foundation courses (those we may consider to be digitally excluded) to conduct surveys face-to-face.
- Conducting survey interviews at Sanctuary Café with people who either don't speak English, are refugees / asylum seekers, or both – with the support of translators.
- Working with the ESCC Gypsy, Roma, Traveller team to promote surveys (both online and hard copy) and offering additional help to people with limited literacy in completing surveys.

2.6 More than 500 people responded to the 'Living Well in East Sussex' and 'Listening to You' surveys. We analysed the survey results and identified six priorities. Overall, the survey respondents were representative of people with protected characteristics already receiving support from ASCH, more information is set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

2.7 We took these priorities to a range of focus groups to explore them further, involving another 186 people. With some residents, where appropriate, we held discussions through one-to-one interviews instead of in groups. Most of our focus groups were organised by colleagues within VCSE services. More information about each focus group or set of interviews is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

2.8 The product of our engagement with residents is a set of six priorities, as described below. These priorities reflect the things that local people told us were most important to live a good life. Further examples and details of the things people told us, including quotes, is set out in section four of the strategy publication in Appendix 2.

1. Right support, right place, right time
2. Information and communication about care and support
3. Cost of living and cost of care, now and in the future
4. A suitable home
5. Personal connections with others
6. Group activities, hobbies and volunteering

2.9 Bringing all that feedback together, we then asked people working within, or alongside, adult social care services to respond to the priorities of local people and identify how they could improve people's experiences of receiving care and support. This included a survey and three workshops with people from ESCC, district and borough councils, NHS Sussex, the VCSE sector and the private care sector. The product of our engagement with those stakeholder groups is a set of 15 'we will' statements outlining our strategic response to the six priorities of local people. These statements are numbered to indicate how they align to each of our six priorities:

We will...

Right support, right place, right time

1.1 Build on our approach to personalised assessments and support, learning from residents' experiences so that people feel treated as individuals and experience their contact with adult social care as a two-way conversation between resident and worker.

1.2 Work with care and support providers to respond to workforce constraints, such as supporting organisations to be well-led and overcoming barriers to taking up training.

1.3 Build on the ways our staff enable residents to access timely support for physical, mental health and emotional wellbeing, including support beyond those services available from East Sussex County Council.

1.4 Help people through key changes at different stages of life, including helping people prepare for and navigate changes in later life and supporting young people to prepare for adulthood.

Information and communication about care and support

2.1 Use clear and inclusive language and alternative formats to explain to residents and partners what adult social care offers, including how and when to contact East Sussex County Council.

2.2 Find new ways to provide timely updates to people about the services they are getting, or have applied for, such as using digital tools and information generated automatically.

2.3 Make sure there are places in the community available to support people to get and return information about care and support services, including help with online financial assessments.

Cost of living and cost of care, now and in the future

3.1 Improve how staff and services direct people to financial information, advice and guidance, and identify people who are withdrawing from care because of financial barriers.

3.2 Improve how we support people around welfare benefits and debt management.

A suitable home

4.1 Co-ordinate the information, advice and support people receive to live in homes suitable for their needs by exploring different ways of working, improving access to equipment and testing new and innovative ways that modern technology can enable people to live independently.

4.2 Work with partners and residents to promote the safe accommodation and support available to people at risk of abuse using a range of channels and methods.

Personal connections with others

5.1 Bring services and communities together around neighbourhoods and/or groups of people with shared needs and interests to develop access to, and availability of, activities and other support aimed at addressing loneliness.

5.2 Work with social care providers to engage with and support unpaid carers, building on the tailored support available to connect groups of carers with shared needs and interests.

Group activities, hobbies and volunteering

6.1 Enable people to connect with communities, get active and live well by working together with residents and community organisations / groups to identify and develop inclusive and accessible activities.

6.2 Reduce barriers to people accessing volunteering, or barriers for service providers in hosting volunteers, including developing ways to promote volunteering around people's passions and hobbies.

2.10 The strategy 'we will' statements seek to deliver a range of interventions that link to and support the delivery of our Council Plan. The delivery of the strategy will build on personalised approaches to care and support, help people to help themselves through improved access to information and support available in the community, and further develop partnership working with different services or with residents to make best use of resources. Any cost pressures associated with the implementation of the strategy will be considered as part of the 2024/25 Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process, with any impact reflected in the council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

2.11 Whilst for ASCH the focus of delivering the strategy will be supporting people with Care Act eligible needs, the 'we will' statements also reflect ways in which statutory and independent sector services can prevent or delay the need for care and support. The statements present an opportunity to build on relationships with the VCSE sector and jointly develop work to address loneliness (building on the work Public Health teams have done to date), enhance volunteering, and more. The statements and priorities in our strategy also complement and align to the strategic plans set out in [Healthy lives, healthy people: East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board strategy](#) and the work we will deliver alongside Integrated Care System partners through [Improving Lives Together strategy - Sussex Health and Care](#). This includes ways in which the strategy will help to address health inequalities and the wider determinants of health, such as interventions that enable people to live in suitable homes, reduce social isolation, and access financial advice and support.

2.12 An action plan, setting out how and when each of these 'we will' statements will be delivered, will be produced over the summer of 2023. The action plan will include the steps agreed to feasibly address the needs and gaps described by local people. Those steps will be determined, as appropriate, with our partners in the NHS, District and Borough councils, and the VCSE. We will continue to have a dialogue with both residents and local organisations about the 'we will' statements and strategy action plan and be open to new opportunities and changes in the way we meet resident needs. Included within that action plan will be steps to advance equality of opportunity and respond to the potential impact of the strategy on people with protected characteristics, as identified through the equality impact assessment, a summary of that assessment is included in Appendix 3.

2.13 Future updates will be included within the quarterly monitoring for Reconciling Policy Performance and Resources, setting out the progress achieved to deliver this strategy and the impact it is having on local people.

2.14 To support the launch of the strategy, the strategy publication will be available in both a web and printed format, as well as in EasyRead. A comprehensive communications plan has been produced to ensure we reach a range of stakeholders through the launch, utilising promotional materials such as postcards, social media content and a strategy video. The launch of the strategy will be supported through local partners helping us to promote it, such as those in the NHS, District and Borough councils and VCSE sector.

3 Conclusion and recommendations

3.1 In conclusion, an adult social care strategy poses an opportunity to align local services and support around the needs of local people, the national vision for adult social care and existing plans or strategies linked to ESCC and the wider health and social care system. The strategy has been developed following an extensive engagement process with both residents and those who work within or alongside adult social care. It provides a set of long-term priorities for adult social care alongside a clear response for how we will help people live well in East Sussex, building on the strengths of local people, services, and community assets.

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LOCAL MEMBERS:

This is a countywide strategy and therefore will be relevant to all local members.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Additional strategy development information

Appendix 2: What matters to you – East Sussex Adult Social Care Strategy

Appendix 3: Equalities Impact Assessment summary