

Cabinet	 TOWER HAMLETS
28 October 2020	
Report of: Denise Radley, Corporate Director – Health, Adult and Community Services	Classification: Unrestricted
COVID-19 Adult Social Care Winter Plan	

Lead Member	Councillor Rachel Blake, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Originating Officer(s)	Joanne Starkie (Head of Strategy and Policy – Health, Adults and Communities)
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Forward Plan Notice Published	29 September 2020
Reason for Key Decision	Significant impact on two or more wards
Strategic Plan Priority	All

Executive Summary

This report and appendices set out the proposed plan in adult social care over the winter period.

Winter is generally understood to be a period of increased pressure on the health and social care system. This year, we face significant additional challenges given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Tower Hamlets Adult Social Care Winter Plan has been developed in response to this. The plan sets out our preparedness for the coming winter period, setting out the breadth and scale of preparations on issues that include:

- Our approach to hospital discharge for those who need care and support
- Care homes
- Personal protective equipment
- Flu vaccines
- The wellbeing and capacity of the social care workforce
- Work to tackle inequalities
- The wider impacts of the pandemic, including work to tackle loneliness and social isolation
- How we will use our allocation of the Infection Control Fund.

The plan reflects the requirements of the national Adult Social Care Winter Plan and is aligned to our Outbreak Control Plan and to winter plans held by health partners. The plan will be further refined through engagement with health partners, care providers and residents.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

- i. Note the preparations and plans in place in adult social care for the winter period, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ii. Agree the COVID-19 Adult Social Care Winter Plan and use of the Infection Control Fund.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 Winter is typically a period of increased pressure and demand on health and social care services. The interplay between this and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic means winter preparedness is a key issue for adult social care.
- 1.2 It is a requirement for each local authority to develop an Adult Social Care Winter Plan by 31st October 2020. This requirement is described in the national Adult Social Care Winter Plan, published on 18th September 2020.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Adult Social Care Winter Plan can be amended in line with feedback.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 Winter pressures and the COVID-19 pandemic

- 3.1.1 The winter period is generally understood to be a period of increased pressure on the health and social care system. The onset of cold weather and 'seasonal illnesses' including flu brings with it higher demand for primary health care, secondary health care and social care.
- 3.1.2 The interplay between this and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is a key challenge. Diseases such as asthma or COPD can worsen over the winter period and there is a link between these diseases and severe COVID-19. Increased demand on health and social care as a result of a 'second wave' will be in addition to the typical increase in demand over the winter, at a time when a number of services are not operating at full capacity in order to meet social distancing restrictions. National and local winter plans across the health and social care system are therefore being developed to set out how these challenges will be addressed.
- 3.1.3 The wider context is also pertinent here. Everyone is living with ongoing social distancing restrictions, and it is likely that there will be periods when these restrictions get tighter for Tower Hamlets if infection rates continue to rise. People tend to spend less time outdoors in winter, and this combined with social distancing restrictions means loneliness, social isolation and mental health issues are all significant risks for those who need adult social care. The economic impact of the pandemic was cushioned to an extent over the spring and summer (e.g. through the furlough

scheme and eviction ban), but as we move into the winter period it is likely we will see a rise in things like unemployment.

3.2 National Adult Social Care Winter Plan

3.2.1 The national Adult Social Care Winter Plan was published on 18th September 2020. The plan articulates the government's three overarching priorities for adult social care:

- Ensuring everyone who needs care or support can get high-quality, timely and safe care throughout the autumn and winter period.
- Protecting people who need care, support or safeguards, the social care workforce, and carers from infections including COVID-19.
- Making sure that people who need care, support or safeguards remain connected to essential services and their loved ones whilst protecting individuals from infections including COVID-19.

3.2.2 The plan sets out what the government will do, what local authorities should do and what care providers should do on key issues that include:

- Discharge from hospital
- Care homes
- Flu
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Workforce and wellbeing.

3.2.3 More information on the contents of the national Adult Social Care Winter Plan is attached as Appendix I.

3.3 Tower Hamlets Adult Social Care Winter Plan

3.3.1 The national plan sets out the requirement for each local authority to develop its own winter plan by 31st October 2020. The Tower Hamlets Adult Social Care Winter Plan is appended to this report.

3.3.2 The plan sets out our preparedness for the coming winter period, focusing on the following issues:

- Our approach to hospital discharge for those who need care and support
- Care homes
- Personal protective equipment
- Homecare, direct payments, day services, respite and support to unpaid carers
- Safeguarding, quality assurance and Care Act Easements
- Tackling inequalities for Black, Asian and Minority ethnic (BAME) communities and for people with a learning disability, autism or mental health issue
- Workforce and market oversight
- Flu vaccines, cold weather and shielding
- The wider impacts of the pandemic, including work to tackle loneliness and social isolation
- How we will use our allocation of the Infection Control Fund. Our expected allocation is £1.4m covering the period up to 31st March 2020.

3.3.3 The plan reflects the requirements of the national Adult Social Care Winter Plan and is aligned to:

- Our Outbreak Control Plan
- Our Care Home Support Plan and subsequent action plans
- Our Adverse Weather protocols
- The Tower Hamlets Together Borough Plan
- Winter plans held by health partners.

3.3.4 The plan will be further refined through engagement with health partners, care providers and residents.

4. **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Age**

4.1.1 A significant proportion of adult social care users are aged 60 or over¹ and we know that old age is a significant risk factor for severe and fatal Covid-19 cases. As such, the interventions in the Winter Plan that seek to protect the health and wellbeing of social care users are therefore particularly pertinent for older people.

4.1.2 Older people are affected by the wider impacts of the pandemic. Older people are vulnerable to loneliness, possibly exacerbated by many not using technology to maintain social contact in lockdown (the 'digital divide'). They are also more likely to be in poorer health, so may have been disproportionately impacted by disruption to health services caused by the pandemic. The Winter Plan references actions being taken to address these issues.

4.2 **Disability**

4.2.1 The nature of adult social care is such that a high number of social care users are likely to have a disability². Disability alone may not be related to a higher risk of Covid-19, but there is a clear association between Covid-19 fatalities and some underlying health conditions. Furthermore, people with learning disabilities have a higher level of health needs than people without learning disabilities and are more likely to have other health problems (co-morbidities) that may place them at an increased risk if they are exposed to and infected by COVID-19. As such, the interventions in the Winter Plan that seek to protect the health and wellbeing of social care users are therefore particularly pertinent for people with a disability.

4.2.2 The national Winter Plan states that local action should be taken to '*understand and address health inequalities across the sector and develop actions with partners, where required, taking into account...inequalities experienced by people with learning disabilities, autistic adults, and people with mental health difficulties*'. Actions in relation to this are included in the Winter Plan.

¹ As of June 2018, 61% of adult social care community-based service users were aged 60 or over.

² 64% of service users primarily need physical support. 21% primarily need support related to a learning disability. 11% primarily need support related to a mental health issue

4.2.3 People with a disability, long-term condition or mental health issue are more likely to be in contact with health services so may have been disproportionately impacted by disruption to health services caused by the pandemic. People who are 'shielding' are also more likely to be seen in this group, and those shielding are potentially at a greater risk of worsening physical and mental health as a result of stricter social distancing guidelines. The Winter Plan references actions being taken to address these issues.

4.3 Ethnicity

4.3.1 The ethnicity of staff, service users and carers in adult social care is diverse³. People of a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19⁴, and the pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement have shone a light on the inequalities facing BAME communities in the UK. National publications including the June 2020 [Public Health England report](#) on understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities have made recommendations for health and social care systems to tackle inequality, and a wide range of work is being carried out locally to take this forward.

4.3.2 The national Winter Plan states that local action should be taken to '*understand and address health inequalities across the sector and develop actions with partners, where required, taking into account the implications of higher prevalence of COVID-19 in Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities*'. Actions in relation to this are included in the Winter Plan.

4.4 Other protected characteristics

4.4.1 The Winter Plan focuses on disability and BAME inequality, in line with the focus of the national Winter Plan. In terms of other protected characteristics (religion or belief, sex, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and socio-economic status), the Winter Plan is intended to mitigate the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic applicable to adult social care, as identified in the COVID-19 Equality Analysis carried out in summer 2020.

5. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

5.1. Any costs associated with delivering the winter plan as set out in appendices 1 to 3 will be met from existing resources and will not create any new pressures on the current revenue budget. The annual winter pressure grant awarded to TH of £1.465m supports the current revenue budget for 2020/21 of £100.91m and is therefore not available to support any new or additional services as part of the challenge in delivering the Winter Plan. New funding has been received by TH through an additional allocation to the Infection Control Fund Grant where TH has

³ As of June 2018, 38% of adult social care community-based service users were of a White ethnic background. 38% were of an Asian ethnic background and 14% were of a Black ethnic background. In the 2011 Census, 33% of carers in Tower Hamlets are a White British ethnic background and 43% were of a Bangladeshi ethnic background.

⁴ June PHE report: People of Bangladeshi ethnicity around twice risk of death as White British when other factors accounted for. Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian, Caribbean and Other Black ethnicity: between 10 and 50% higher than White British.

been awarded £1.4m. This funding will be passported to care homes and community care providers in the borough subject to conditions of the grant.

6. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 6.1. Local authorities have duties to meet adult social care needs under the Care Act 2014 and public health duties to improve the health of the people in its area under Section 2B of the National Health Service Act 2006.
 - 6.2. The policy paper 'Adult Social Care – Our COVID-19 Winter Plan 2020-21' (September 2020) and guidance 'About the Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund' (updated 21 September 2020) set out the government's expectations and requirements for local authorities.
 - 6.3. The matters set out in this report comply with the above legislation and guidance.
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Appendices

Appendix I: Briefing on the national Adult Social Care Winter Plan

Appendix II: Tower Hamlets Adult Social Care Winter Plan

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

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