

HEALTH LIAISON BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2021 commencing at 12.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Maskell (Chairman)

Cllrs. Dr. Canet, Perry Cole, G. Darrington, Harrison and Hunter

Cllr. P. Darrington was also present.

An apology was received from Cllr. Coleman

Cllr. Parkin was present via a virtual media platform, which does not constitute attendance as recognised by the Local Government Act 1972.

1. Minutes

The Chairman highlighted that following discussion on digital inclusion at the previous meeting, the new Digital Inclusion Officer at Compaid would be invited to the next meeting.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Health Liaison Board held on 27 January 2021 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

3. Presentation by a representative of the Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services (DAVSS)

The Chairman welcomed Zoe Stuttard from the Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Service (DAVSS) to the Board. She gave a verbal update on the services in the last year. DAVSS was a charity that supported any victim of domestic abuse who sought help. In the last year, DAVSS had 1016 referrals, of those referrals 68 were men. Of the families referred, 68 families were from black or minority ethnic background, 17 clients were from the LGBT+ community, and 52 clients were identified as disabled. DAVSS was a small charity with 50 volunteers and 13 new volunteers currently in training.

Volunteers were trained to a high level to support victims through all aspects of domestic abuse, this included supporting clients through any court proceedings. DAVSS had helped with 128 nominal maintenance orders and 10 prohibited steps orders. The organisation also enabled 55 child arrangement orders and 2 forced marriage protection orders in the last year.

Health Liaison Board - 26 May 2021

It was identified that there had been more clients intending to flee during lockdown, however DAVSS had maintained support by arranging refuse homes or emergency housing, despite the increased difficulties in making contact during this period.

Most of those working or volunteering for DAVSS had been working from home with most support provided over the phone. The opening hours of the line had been extended to 10am to 4pm due to an increased demand in services.

Following queries, it was clarified that victims, for their safety, often had to leave their homes, rather than their abusers.

The Board queried what the Members could do to support DAVSS, particularly in the north of the District. Suggestions included providing the charity's contact details to any agencies including churches, schools or GP surgeries. It was highlighted that the Chief Executive of DAVSS and the Health & Communities Manager regularly meet. The Chairman of the Council would be supporting DAVSS at her events and the Board hoped this support would give DAVSS more publicity. The Health & Communities Manager advised that the Council had provided community funding to help support the charity.

The increase in referrals from men had been noted, with DAVSS successful in providing protection orders for men. It was noted that there was an overall increase in referrals and service provision. Members queried the exact increase in demand compared to that before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Committee members also raised their concerns that men should continue to be supported and empowered to be able to refer to themselves if they become victims of abuse.

Action 1: That the Health & Communities Manager circulate number of referrals to DAVSS in the 2020-2021 year compared to the 2019-2020 year.

The helpline was available Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm with many calls received on Friday afternoons.

The Chairman thanked Zoe Stuttard for her attendance at the meeting at short notice.

4. Presentation by a representative of Health Watch

The Chairman welcomed Lucie Price from Healthwatch Kent. She gave a presentation summarising the impacts of Covid-19 on their services. Healthwatch acts as an independent champion for those who use health and social care services in Kent and engage with the community to understand the needs and experiences of health and social care service users. The feedback received had been forwarded to service providers, commissioners and decision makers.

Health Liaison Board - 26 May 2021

The impacts of Covid-19 on the services included the challenges of remote working and engaging with the public. Previously, feedback had been gathered by talking to people in the street, attending events and doing visits to hospitals. This was maintained through social media channels.

Initially, most of the feedback was on how Covid-19 was affecting people. The monthly Covid-19 insight reports had allowed Healthwatch to see themes and trends. For example, mental health related concerns had been either developing or worsening as a result of lockdown measures.

Some of the issues raised in the monthly insight reports included those struggling to receive dental care, isolation, challenges of pregnancy and childcare. A frequent issue raised was digital exclusion with people struggling to access GP services due to long wait lists on phone lines and difficulty booking video call appointments. A number of spotlight reports on specific health and social care services. A report was on hidden cares, pharmacists and dentist had been published.

Going forward, Healthwatch would like to return to public spaces, attending events and visiting hospitals. Some team members at Healthwatch would continue to work remotely while others would return to the offices.

Following queries, Members were advised that more responses were received from eastern parts of Kent such as Ashford and Folkestone and less from Sevenoaks. The Board expressed that they would like to support Healthwatch going forward and make residents aware of the organisation through signposting.

Members were further advised that the feedback received by Healthwatch is sent to clinical commissioning groups and other organisations across Kent to help enact change.

The Chairman thanked Lucie Price for her presentation and attendance.

5. Updates from Health Groups that Members attend

The Health & Communities Manager gave an update to Members and set out plans to support mental health within the district such as the Every Step Counts event and working with the Ramblers Association. Measures to support the mental health of staff at the Council included Mental Health First Aid training to staff. Members expressed interest in taking the First Aid training themselves.

6. Workplan

The work plan was noted with the addition of an update from Compaid on digital inclusion. Members requested that there be a focus on mental health for the West Kent Integrated Care Partnership Update. Members expressed interest in discussion dentistry provision at a future meeting of the Board.

Health Liaison Board - 26 May 2021

Action 2: The Health & Communities Manager to circulate a brief of the Digital Inclusion Officer and referral process.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 1.31 PM

CHAIRMAN