

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REVIEW INTO SOCIAL ISOLATION

MEETING WITH VICTORA SLEIGHT, NEIGHBOURHOOD LEAD (LINCOLN CITY SOUTH), LINCOLNSHIRE PARTNERSHIP FOUNDATION TRUST – 15 JULY 2019

In attendance: Councillor Jane Loffhagen (Chair of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, Graham Watts (Democratic Team Leader and Elections Manager) and Victoria Sleight (Neighbourhood Lead, Lincoln City South – Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust)

The meeting commenced with an overview of the Scrutiny Committee's Scrutiny Review into the issue of Social Isolation in the City of Lincoln.

Victoria Sleight was unable to attend the meeting of the Committee to be held later on 15 July 2019 but agreed to meet with the Chair and officers to provide any relevant information and answer any questions. The following points were made during the meeting:

- there were ten Neighbourhood Leads across the county in Lincolnshire, all with different specialisms and from different backgrounds;
- Neighbourhood Leads work with Primary Care Networks, which had been introduced to bring general practices together for a range of reasons; namely improving the ability of practices to recruit and retain staff, manage financial and estates pressures but also to provide a wider range of services to patients and more easily integrate with the wider health and care system;
- Victoria personally had lots of contact with Paul Carrick, the Council's Neighbourhood Manager, who sat on the Lincoln North and South Project Board;
- the role of Social Prescribers was relatively new, although had been in place across Lincolnshire for a year with more being introduced across the country;
- there were three tiers associated with Social Prescribers; namely signposting, more in-depth support and more complex integration back into the community;
- the role of Social Prescribers was demonstrated via a short video which Victoria agreed to forward a link to;
- Victoria sat on a working group which was looking to develop a digital application regarding mental health and she was trying to make the role of Social Prescribers part of that in order to make them more accessible;
- anyone could refer someone onto a Social Prescriber, even a friend or a member of a person's family or the individual themselves. The referral did not solely have to come from a GP, medical or clinical professional;
- comparing practices at Nettleham and Birchwood, there was initially a large uptake of Social Prescribers in Nettleham whereas it became necessary to drive this more at Birchwood where the take up had been relatively low. Referrals to Social Prescribers in Birchwood had now seen a significant increase;

- Victoria said that one Social Prescriber in each practice would be the ideal ratio, equating to six in the area she represented, whereas she currently had two and did not expect this to be increased;
- the benefits of Social Prescribers, as demonstrated in the video, was that they were really good at talking and listening to people's problems and showing true empathy. They were able to offer support and advice which people seemed more receptive to given that they were not clinical and were generally perceived as friendly and supportive people;
- Neighbourhood Leads (or Practitioners) effectively sought to understand and appropriately manage referrals, as it may not always be necessary for someone to see a GP and may instead be more beneficial to make contact with a Social Prescriber, for example. These practitioners built up a significant understanding of people's needs that would not necessarily have been gained via a simple GP visit. By supporting this way of working, medical and clinical professionals could actually reduce their workload whilst at the same time ensure that people received the support they required. It was difficult sometimes for professionals to accept or properly understand the Neighbourhood Working concept;
- anyone in the city could go to their GP and be referred to Neighbourhood Working, with Social Prescribing forming part of that support network. It was reiterated that referrals could be made from anyone, not necessarily a GP or medical or clinical professional;
- hub and spoke work within the city was really helpful, particularly with regard to homelessness and mental health aspects which were coming together very well in partnership with Development Plus, the City Council and the County Council amongst other partners and stakeholders;
- some of this was about raising awareness and practitioners knowing what was happening in local areas and making connections, improving integration and growing the concept;
- it would be helpful to have regular contact and communication with the Council on anything it was seeking to develop across the city which may link into the Neighbourhood Working role;
- an example was given of the Lincoln North Board which regularly demonstrated that people in the area were connected and know what was happening in their local communities, with organisations such as the Tower Action Group, supported by the Council, providing a community hub for people. There were similar networks and pockets of activity across the city. It was about making sure these activities and projects were all linked in, with the Community Hub in Sincil Bank being a great example of this;
- in respect of those people refusing to access services or experiencing loneliness, a befriending team or similar service would be very useful to help engage with hard to reach people;
- some people struggled with digitalisation so it was important to maintain services through traditional means as well as through a digital offer;
- the Council could offer support not solely through funding but through use of its space and facilities, perhaps enabling communities to take ownership;

- the Council could also assist with exposing certain events or services, particularly through its social media, with a vital aspect being about awareness rather than solely seeking to solve problems;
- the NHS ten-year plan document would be interesting reading for the Committee.

Victoria agreed to provide contact details of colleagues who would be able to provide statistical information on the subject of Social Isolation.