

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

18 January 2024

GP Access Task Group

Report from: James Williams, Director of Public Health

Author: Dr Logan Manikam, Consultant in Public Health Medicine

Summary

This report and attached action plan (Appendix 1) outline the progress made in implementing the 14 recommendations from the GP Access Task Group report of June 2023.

1. Recommendation

1.1 Members are asked to note the updates and progress achieved in implementing the recommendations from the GP Access in Medway Task Group report of June 2023.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1 In accordance with Chapter 4 of the Constitution (Part 5 – Overview and Scrutiny Rules - paragraph 21.1 (xviii)), individual overview and scrutiny committees bear the responsibility of appointing time-limited Task Groups. These Task Groups are tasked with conducting comprehensive reviews, as sanctioned by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the primary objective being to formulate recommendations to be presented to the Council, Leader, and Cabinet as deemed appropriate.

3. Background

3.1 The initial report, presented to the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 January 2023, provided the interim findings of the GP Access Task Group. The Task Group was led by Councillors Wildey (Chairman), Murray, Price, Purdy, and Mrs Elizabeth Turpin. At this meeting, the Committee agreed to note the interim report; that the report be not forwarded to Cabinet at this stage. The report and its interim recommendations were to be revisited in the summer with further engagement work with GPs.

- 3.2 **At the March 2023 meeting of the Committee**, the Committee noted that a Member's item from Councillor Murray requesting that (at least) three Members of the Committee indicate their support for a minority view, which was to submit the GP Access Task Group interim report and interim recommendations to the next meeting of the Cabinet on 4 April 2023.
- 3.3 **Cabinet on 4 April 2023** considered this minority report and agreed to note the interim report and that the Task Group report and its draft recommendations be revisited in summer 2023 to enable completion of the work, including further engagement with GPs and that the completed Task Group report be presented to a future Cabinet meeting.
- 3.4 **At the Cabinet meeting on 13 June 2023** the new administration asked for the report from the Task Group to be presented to Cabinet for reconsideration, where the report was agreed.
- 3.5 The attached Action Plan (Appendix 1) provides an update on the progress made against the recommendations of the review thus far.

4. Key Findings and Analysis

- 4.1 The report findings indicate progress between June 2023 and December 2023 in alleviating the strain on the healthcare system, specifically on GPs.
- 4.2 There is a noticeable trend in the number of GPs per area, with a consistent decline since 2017, reaching its lowest point in 2020. Although GP numbers have not yet reached the levels recorded in 2017, a steady increase has been observed since then. This trend is evident both within Medway and throughout the entirety of Kent.
- 4.3 To ensure equitable access to services, substantial efforts have been invested in enhancing digital inclusion and community digital literacy. This involves promoting free courses to boost digital literacy and engaging in discussions on multiple forums such as The Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 4.4 Alongside fostering digital literacy within the community, initiatives have been introduced to enhance providers' technological proficiency. Telephony training courses were implemented, with 98% of Medway practices participating in K&M ICB's digital telephony program. Additionally, compassion training has been provided to ensure that staff remains composed and responsive to patients.
- 4.5 To alleviate stress on GPs, several initiatives have been launched. Collaborating with Primary Care Network (PCN), K&M ICB is expanding training placements to support not only medical students and GP trainees but also other allied health professionals. Moreover, measures to enhance pharmacy prescribing are being introduced to reduce demand on GPs.

5. Risk management

5.1 There are no specific risk implications for Medway Council arising from the contents of this report.

6. Climate change implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications to Medway Council associated with this report.

7. Financial and legal implications

7.1 There are no specific financial or legal implications for Medway Council arising directly from the contents of the report.

Lead officer contact

James Williams, Director of Public Health

Tel: (01634) 334308 Email: james.williams@medway.gov.uk

Dr Logan Manikam, Consultant in Public Health Medicine

Tel: 07868 721152 Email: logan.manikam@medway.gov.uk

John Cole, Public Health Programme Manager

Tel: 07968 734055 Email: john.cole@medway.gov.uk

Tala El Khatib, Interim Public Health Project Officer

Tel: 07534 109051 Email: tala.khatib@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1- Action Log

Background papers

Report from the GP Access in Medway Task Group (June 2023) -

<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgconvert2pdf.aspx?id=69000>

BMA's Safe working in general practice: <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/managing-workload/safe-working-in-general-practice>

Primary Care Network: <https://kmpctraininghub.nhs.uk/resources>

Kindness into Action: <https://www.akind.life/solutions/kindness-into-action/>

Health and Wellbeing Hub: <https://www.kmstaffwellbeinghub.uk/>

The Folkestone, Hythe and Rural PCN Hub Pilot Project- A blueprint guide:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/south-east/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/2023/08/Folkestone-blueprint-guide.pdf>

NHS England's "Securing Excellence in Primary Care (GP) Digital Services: The Primary Care (GP) Digital Services Operating Model 2021-2023:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/digitaltechnology/digital-primary-care/gp-digital-services-operating-model-21-23/>