

**HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16 JANUARY 2020**

KENT AND MEDWAY WHEELCHAIR SERVICE

Report from: Ailsa Ogilvie, Director of Partnerships and
Membership Engagement, Thanet CCG

Author: Tamsin Flint, Commissioning Manager, Thanet CCG

Summary

This report provides an update on progress to deliver improvements in service performance and quality for Kent and Medway's wheelchair service users.

Following the additional funding from the eight Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) along with improved processes and increases in clinical and support staff put in place by Millbrook Healthcare, there is ongoing and steady improvement in the wheelchair service performance. The waiting lists for equipment and repairs continue to reduce and are ahead of the improvement plan trajectory and average waiting times are shortening.

In two key areas, however, repairs within three working days and children's cases closed within 18 weeks, performance is off trajectory. Remedial Action Plans are in place and the CCG is monitoring these closely to ensure that the trajectory is met within agreed timescales.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Under the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 the Council may review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of the health service in Medway. In carrying out health scrutiny a local authority must invite interested parties to comment and take account of any relevant information available to it, and in particular, relevant information provided to it by a local Healthwatch. The Council has delegated responsibility for discharging this function to this Committee and to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in the Council's Constitution.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Committee has previously been notified that there was pressure on the Kent and Medway Wheelchair Service, with service users experiencing longer waiting times for equipment, repairs and assessment. Thanet NHS Clinical Commissioning Group commissions the service, which is provided by Millbrook Healthcare on behalf of the Kent and Medway clinical commissioning groups.
- 2.2 Following contract mobilisation Millbrook Healthcare raised concerns about the caseload inherited from the previous provider which was putting pressure on the Kent and Medway Wheelchair Service, with service users experiencing longer waiting times for equipment, repairs and assessment.
- 2.3 Kent and Medway CCGs agreed to fund the impact of the unbalanced caseload inherited from the previous provider, as well as the unexpected recurrent demand experienced in the first two years of the contract. They agreed that data should be reviewed at the end of the second year (2018/19) to confirm the initial funding requirement for the first two years and clarify any recurrent demand over the final three years of the contract.
- 2.4 Concerns regarding the Wheelchair Service were raised by Members at the December 2018 meeting of this Committee. These included concern that the service was not considered by Members to have improved sufficiently and anecdotal evidence from service users that suggested that some were still waiting for a significant period for either initial assessment / equipment provision or wheelchair repairs.
- 2.5 A briefing note was provided in August 2019 which highlighted the steady and continuous improvement in service performance and quality, although it was recognised that there are still some service users who are experiencing long waiting times for wheelchair assessments and repairs.

3. Performance

- 3.1 Latest data to end of November 2019 shows evidence of continued overarching improvement with a reduction in the waiting list for equipment. The overall waiting list has reduced from its peak of 3,313 in September 2018 to 1,449 open cases at the end of November 2019. Over the last 12 months (December 2018 to November 2019) 7,534 referrals have been concluded.
- 3.2 Millbrook Healthcare continues to focus on those service users who have been waiting a long time and the average waiting time has more than halved from 33 weeks at the end of December 2018 to 14.57 weeks at the end of November 2019.
- 3.3 At the end of November 2019, in Medway there were 165 adults and 38 children on the waiting list. The average waiting time for Medway service users is 11.7 weeks for adults and 8.5 weeks for children, which are the shortest waiting times compared with other areas across Kent.
- 3.4 For repairs, the number of service users who have been waiting for a wheelchair repair for more than ten days has reduced from 108 at the end of December 2018 to 64 by the end of November 2019.

3.5 In November 2019 there were 390 repairs completed, of which 38 per cent were completed within three working days. Although there has been some improvement in the percentage of repairs completed within three working days, this is still not at the level it needs to be with service users waiting on average 6 working days for a standard repair to be completed. Millbrook is working on a number of actions to help improve repair waiting times, this has included a review of their stock carried to ensure the fast moving stock items are readily available. One of the reasons behind the average waiting time is that there have been a high proportion of specialist repairs which requires specialist parts to be ordered in. The CCG is looking at the 3 day standard repair KPI to explore whether it would be more appropriate to look at routine and specialist repairs separately as the lead times are different. A Remedial Action Plan is in place to monitor repairs performance closely.

4. 18 week waits for children

4.1 There has been an increase in children referrals into the service over the last 6 months with an average increase of 27 children per month. In November 2019, there were 255 children on an open episode of care. Over three quarters (82.7 per cent) of these children have been waiting less than 18 weeks which is a significant improvement on where we were 12 months ago, when half (50.5 per cent) of children were waiting less than 18 weeks. However, there is still a way to go in order to achieve the national target of 92% and a Remedial Action Plan is in place with a trajectory of meeting this target by end of January 2020.

4.2 At the end of November 2019, there were 44 open children's referrals over the 18 week pathway. Millbrook Healthcare reviews all of these children referrals on a weekly basis and reports back to the CCG at the monthly Contract Management Committee meetings. For 16 of these open cases the reasons for delaying case closure are outside the control of the wheelchair service, some examples of the circumstances which prevent Millbrook Healthcare being able to progress cases within 18 weeks include:

- Multiple appointments being cancelled by parents or failing to attend appointments (DNA's). Common reasons given for appointments being cancelled include issues with transport, parents unable to get time off work or unable to bring the service user due to their own ill health
- Service user unable to attend due to sickness or surgery/hospital appointments
- Parents requesting appointments are booked during school term time only or school holiday time only
- Parents not returning voucher paperwork in a timely manner.

5. 18 week waits for adults

5.1 There has also been an increase in the average number of adult referrals into the service over the last six months with an average increase of 106 adult referrals per month. In November 2019, 1,194 adults were on an open episode of care, of which nearly three quarters (72.1 per cent) have been waiting less than 18 weeks which represents an improvement over the last 12 months when only a third (35.5 per cent in December 2018) had been waiting less than 18 weeks. There is not a national 18 week target for wheelchair

services for adults but Millbrook Healthcare are working on a trajectory and action plan to meet the CCG's target of 90% for adults.

6. Service User Engagement

- 6.1 Following the three service user Engagement Events which were held in April and May 2019 Millbrook Healthcare has established a service improvement board involving service users, carers and family members. These meetings are held quarterly and play a pivotal role in driving further improvements in the service.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

- 7.1 The CCGs are delighted that Millbrook Healthcare now have a Community Liaison and Engagement Officer in post since November 2019. We are already seeing and hearing the benefits of having this person in post for staff at Millbrook Healthcare, service users and other organisations/forums. This role will be pivotal in building and strengthening relationships with key stakeholders. Millbrook Healthcare continues to engage with Healthwatch, the Physical Disabilities Forum and Centre for Independent Living. Both Millbrook Healthcare and the CCG are working together to help improve joined up working with other health, social care and education partners.

8. Personal Wheelchair Budgets

- 8.1 Our aim is to develop a personal wheelchair budget scheme that supports the health and wellbeing needs of service users that is easy to access and use. This will give service users wider choice regarding their wheelchair provision. We are working with service users and staff to develop information and communication material and are currently implementing a stakeholder engagement plan in order to deliver better integrated working and funding. We are entering a pilot stage, identifying potential cases from which we can learn and refine our personal wheelchair budget offer.

9. Quality, Safety and Improvement

- 9.1 East Kent CCGs' Quality, Safety and Improvement Team continue to work closely with Millbrook Healthcare to address any quality concerns. Quality Visits were conducted in December 2019 at the two wheelchair service depots, Gillingham and Ashford, with the purpose of gaining assurance that high quality safe care is being delivered and that systems and processes are in place to address and mitigate quality and safety risks. The Quality Visits had a specific focus on Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) processes, Workforce and emerging risks in the system. The Quality Visit team used the CQC's key lines of enquiry as the format to the visits.
- 9.2 A Complaints Concerns and Compliments Steering Group has been established with service user representatives, CCG and Millbrook Healthcare colleagues working together to improve the handling of complaints and to ensure that learnings from complaints help drive further improvements in the service and ultimately deliver better outcomes for service users.
- 9.3 Whilst there is no denying that the complaints process had previously not worked in the best interests of service users, relatives and carers, efforts

made in the last year have seen marked improvements in the timeliness of responses and a greater deal of engagement on a local level in terms of maintaining local resolution. The newly appointed Community Liaison and Engagement Officer will also help drive this work forward.

10. Wheelchair Service Funding

- 10.1 A review of the ongoing demand for the Kent and Medway Wheelchairs contract identified an annual cost pressure of £427,350 per annum. This was not unexpected and Kent and Medway CCGs had budgeted for this in 2019/20. The funding package provided by the Kent and Medway CCGs over the past 12 months covered this cost pressure for the first two years of the contract (2017-2019), and it has been agreed that the contract value be increased to ensure this cost pressure is funded recurrently for the remainder of the contract. This will enable Millbrook Healthcare to complete their improvement trajectory and sustain waiting times in line with national and locally agreed standards.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 Overall improvements in service performance and quality continue to be made with the size of the waiting list and waiting times reducing for assessment and equipment provision. That said there are two key areas which are not meeting expectations and both the CCG and Millbrook Healthcare have put Remedial Action Plans in place to ensure that these areas are closely monitored and targets achieved within agreed timescales. Feedback from service users continues to improve with more positive comments being received about the service provided.

12. Risk management

- 12.1 There is a possible impact on social care services if clients who require wheelchairs are unable to obtain them when necessary or face delayed repairs. Otherwise, there are no specific risk implications for Medway Council.

13. Financial and Legal implications

- 13.1 There are no financial or legal implications for Medway Council directly arising from this report.

14. Recommendation

- 14.1 It is requested that the Committee notes and comments on the report.

Lead officer contact

Tamsin Flint, Commissioning Manager, Kent and Medway Wheelchair Service, Thanet CCG, Margate. Tel: 03000 424613. Email: Tamsin.flint@nhs.net

Appendices

None.

Background papers

None.