

Milton Keynes Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Subject: Winter Planning and Preparedness

Date of Meeting: 30th September 2020

Report of: Richard Alsop, Director of Contracting & Commissioning, Bedfordshire, Luton & Milton Keynes CCGs

1. Summary

In March 2020, the WHO declared a Coronavirus Pandemic which resulted in an NHS level four incident being declared followed by national lockdown. As the country gradually returns back to the 'new' normal way of life we are heading towards winter.

Every year winter is a challenging time for the delivery of health and social care services and we must ensure that we continue to provide timely and high-quality care. With the challenges that responding to the pandemic brings there is a particular emphasis this year on prioritizing winter planning.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide the Committee with assurance and overview of the plans being developed with NHS and social care partners across Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes, recognizing there will be local variations for each geographical area (Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes).

The Committee is asked to note this report.

3. Background

Every year we are faced with a period of high demand along with an increase in respiratory illness including influenza, providing additional challenges across the NHS and social care systems. Similarly, the weather can be unpredictable with ever changing weather conditions. Therefore, winter is not classed as an emergency and it is not an unusual event, however we need to identify and have plans in place to mitigate

known risks as we go into the winter months (1st November–31st March). Demand on health and social care services tend to increase markedly from Christmas onwards into the New Year and, whilst these are general patterns, the prevailing weather conditions can make a difference to timings, for example, the majority of the burden of cold-related ill-health occurs at moderate outdoor winter temperatures (from 4-8°C).

The exact timing of any second Covid 2nd peak is at present unknown, although there is now the ability to track cases through the Public Health data system which enables us to have a better understanding of the spread of COVID and to be proactive ahead of a second peak.

Due to the response to COVID a number of sub groups across the BLMK Health and Social Care system have been developed and are fully embedded across the system and report upwardly via the appropriate Cell structure. This has allowed closer working relationships to be developed with system partners, developing good communication with key stakeholders and collaboration in responsiveness to problem solving. As such system partners are already reviewing their winter plans in a number of forums.

Whilst there are shared risks and challenges across the region, our plans are mindful of local variations on how those risks are manifested and, therefore, our mix of representation gives the opportunity to capture these local variations and enables plans to be tailored to the needs of the local population.

4. Winter Plan

The BLMK Winter Plan is being developed to ensure we are able to respond to, and recover from, winter disruptions. This year we have four additional challenges that are likely to put further pressures on the system:

- A potential second wave of coronavirus
- The accumulation of care required for individuals in the community, i.e., patients whose care needs have increased due to non-attendance during Covid
- Services recovering from the first wave
- The expectation from NHSE of increased flu immunisation uptake alongside continued Covid testing

5. Strategic fit

Co-ordination and leadership of system resilience is a key focus for the BLMK Clinical Commissioning Group and is integral to the health and social care recovery plans.

6. Plan of action/Summary of Progress

Within our approach this year NHS and Local Authority partners have completed a self-assessment exercise which asked the following questions:

- Key areas of concern ahead of winter?
- Actions that are being carried out to address these?
- Remaining risks after those actions?
- What dependencies are there to other part of the system/What support do you need?

The output from the self-assessments allows system partners to recognise and understand emerging issues across each organisation and the risks impacting on other services and has informed a detailed gap analysis identifying the following themes:

The Top Five Themes Identified from the Winter Plan Gap Analysis:

1. Demand and Capacity

The ability to have sufficient capacity to meet the demand across a number of areas within the health and social care system is a continuing issue for winter. The challenges imposed by COVID, such as the social distancing and continuous swab testing of employees/care home residents further adds to this issue. Additional resource has been put in place across a number of areas to support the process for example:

- Testing equipment in MK Hospital to allow for same-day results supporting the timely discharge of those patients going to intermediate or permanent placement.
- MKCCG have worked with CNWL to bring commissioned intermediate care beds across Milton Keynes into a single managed arrangement known as 'Seacole beds'. This has enabled MK health and social care partners to continue to expedite safe discharges from MK Hospital.

2. Second Wave of COVID

While a great deal of learning can be drawn from the first wave of COVID, including the need to be more creative with IT interfaces for both health and social care employees as well as patients where possible (e.g. some follow up appointments can be done virtually), a second wave would impact on the health and care system and as such partner organisations are considering this impact as part of the winter requirement, working in tandem with the wider recovery plans.

3. Flu

In light of the risk of flu and COVID co-circulating this winter the national flu immunisation programme will be essential to protecting vulnerable people and supporting the resilience of the health and care system. Therefore, the Clinical Lead for Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Group have developed a Flu vaccination programme with the aims and objectives outlined below:

- The successful delivery of Flu immunisation to all eligible categories of population
- Maximum Coverage of all age groups by making every contact count and achieving as a minimum coverage of 75% of all eligible
- Prevent Flu outbreaks amongst vulnerable population groups of all ages by ensuring vaccination of 65% of <65 year olds; 55% of 2-3 year olds and pregnant women. Ensuring there are no gaps in coverage between least deprived and most deprived.
- Manage outbreaks of Flu through an efficient outbreak management plan with providers
- Reduction of demand on health and care facilities by Influenza related illness

4. Workforce

Discussions have taken place with our health and social care partners in Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes to understand the workforce related challenges and changes they have encountered as a result of COVID.

A BLMK Workforce Working Group is being established to take forward the key priorities - the early work for this group have established that there should be an immediate focus on therapies, linking in with the Allied Health Professional Network and Phlebotomists aligned to the diagnostic pathways in the recovery plan.

5. Mental Health and Learning Disabilities

Mental health services are also put under pressure during the winter months. They have also been placed under additional pressure during the COVID response. A number of initiatives have been put into place to support these services.

- MK Urgent Mental Health 24/7 phone line 0800 0234650
- MK 24/7 access to Mental Health Service via Hospital Liaison
- Under development – MK Crisis Team due to go live end November 2020
- BLMK Multi-Disciplinary approach to supporting the review of Learning Disabilities registers
- Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Transition Care Plans annual health check delivery plans

- Development of a business case for all age Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes eating disorder pathway

In addition to the top five highlighted themes of work identified within the self-assessment, various sub groups meet covering specific areas of winter planning which will feed into the overall winter plan. Some of these are listed below as an example:

- Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Primary and Community Care Management of Vulnerable People including Care Homes
- BLMK Winter Planning workshop for Children and Young People's health services has taken place to understand specific risks and gaps
- Milton Keynes Placed-based Winter Planning Group

7. Proposed Next Steps

To continue with the winter plan developments working at pace with NHS and Social Care system partners in readiness for a finalised plan to be signed off at the A&E Delivery Boards' for Bedfordshire/Luton and Milton Keynes by 1st October 2020.

8. Conclusion

The BLMK Winter Plan will continue to be refined ahead of winter to ensure we are in a strong position to maintain effective and safe services for our communities throughout the Winter of 2020/21.