



Mr Martin Samuels  
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Strategic Director – People  
The Council House  
Priory Road  
Dudley  
DY1 1HF

**ADULT CARE & SUPPORT DIRECTORATE**

Manor Square, Council House  
Solihull West Midlands B91 9QU  
Tel: 0121 704 6317  
Email: [jenny.wood@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.wood@solihull.gov.uk)  
[www.solihull.gov.uk](http://www.solihull.gov.uk)

Your Ref.

Please ask for: Jenny Wood

Our Ref.

Date 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019

**Dear Martin**

**Dudley Borough Council Adult Social Care Peer Challenge July 2019**

I write to give you formal feedback following the peer challenge that was recently undertaken. This builds on the provisional feedback we shared with you on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019. (A copy of our presentation is attached as an appendix).

Whilst I led the peer challenge team as the Lead DASS, I was also joined by colleagues Sarah Dillon, Assistant Director, Telford and Wrekin Council, along with Richard Keble, Assistant Director, Worcestershire County Council and Cllr Paul Watling, Telford and Wrekin Council.

This was the first peer challenge team that included an Expert by Experience from the host council and the peer challenge team wanted to say thank you for taking such a constructive step in facilitating Jon Mansell to be part of the peer challenge team. All members of the peer challenge team wanted to acknowledge the great value that Jon's insight, reflections and overall contributions brought to the whole process. We all learnt from Jon, and we felt that our feedback on the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) that you asked us to focus on was enriched by his contributions as a peer challenge team member.

The process also included a case file audit and this was led by Mark Godfrey for Improvement & Efficiency West Midlands, and undertaken by members of the West Midlands Principal Social Worker Network and the separate report is also relevant to your KLOE.

The peer challenge team would also like to acknowledge the work that was put in ahead of the visit in defining the scope of the programme and the strong organisation of the programme, as well as the preparedness of those who met with the peer challenge team. This approach really supported the peer challenge team to effectively explore the KLOE, with the aim of providing useful feedback which recognises your strengths and also suggesting some areas where the council may want to strengthen performance and delivery of transformational change.

You asked for the peer challenge team to explore three specific areas:

1. Are the governance and leadership arrangements in adult social care working effectively, managing and measuring progress on quality and outcomes for the residents of Dudley? Where could we strengthen our efforts?
2. Our co-production and engagement with people and their families we have worked hard to mature – we know we can do more? Can the team give us feedback on further opportunities we may not be exploiting?
3. We have a fledgling Disability Service, can you consider any early evidence of impact on outcomes and where we might consider accelerating the pace of change?

This letter provides a summary of our findings and recommendations. The feedback presentation given on the 19<sup>th</sup> July and the Case Audit final report are also attached as appendices.

## **Summary**

The team were very impressed with the evidence of a strong and passionate operational management and leadership team in adult social care. The Chief Officer and his team are recognised internally and externally as focused on delivering high quality services for Dudley residents, and have established some excellent relationships with a range of stakeholders including those who use services. They have also delivered the corporate requirements on financial contributions to the overall council budget over several years. The peer challenge team also saw evidence of some innovative developments progressing through Commissioning, which it is recognised sits separately to the Chief Officer's area.

Based upon the evidence that the peer challenge team had opportunity to review during the visit, and the recognition that a range of adult social care related activity sits outside the Chief Officer's service area (albeit within the DASS's), it is recommended that if the council wants to achieve its ambitions to further improve performance and outcomes in adult social care, there are several areas which could be focused on with more rigour. In order to build the foundations for further improvement, the council could consider developing a stronger strategic vision for adult social care which would provide a clear 'common purpose' across all the different council functions which deliver or support different aspects of adult social care. From a commissioning perspective, an overarching vision and direction can then be complemented by a set of overarching commissioning intentions and underpinned by a financial model aligned with the medium term financial planning. The peer challenge team recognised that elements of this work were progressing, but a stronger strategic approach would be beneficial. The peer challenge team thought that the recent launch of the council's overarching vision 'Forging a Future For All' provided the ideal opportunity for adult social care to re-establish a strong vision and direction within the context of the council's overarching new vision.

Without this more strategic approach, a risk exists that further improvements to what is already high-quality operational delivery will be difficult to achieve. In line with the current approach of adult social care services in Dudley, this would be important to progress via a co-produced approach which facilitates ownership across the council, support from partners and involvement of those who use services. Given the high proportion of the total spend of the council on adult social care, the evidence that the peer challenge team saw indicated that without a clearer strategic vision, driven through commissioning intentions and a whole council focus on measuring and reporting outcomes and impact at a corporate and Cabinet level, then the current model will

become unaffordable for the council, as population needs and the cost of care continues to increase. This is also essential to ensure adult social care monies are not invested in areas that are beyond its legal responsibility.

The team heard and met some individuals and groups who were very engaged in developing and designing services and Dudley should be proud of its long history of co-production and level of engagement with local communities, community groups and partners. The case audit also demonstrated a desire to shift towards a more strengths-based approach, focusing on individuals' assets to support them to live as independently as possible. With a clear strategic vision in place, focused on a few key priorities, these excellent examples of co-production and engagement could be delivered at scale to ensure that alternatives to traditional care delivery are available. In addition, this would help develop the business processes and systems required to support a more asset based approach, and provide the direction-setting for the internal and external cultural change required to take forward the asset-based work, including the ambitious commissioning-led development to implement a new model of domiciliary care. Focusing on delivering major transformational change as part of a strategic vision will require enough commissioning and change capacity and this would be worthwhile investment to mitigate the financial fragility going forward.

### **Leadership and Governance**

The peer challenge team were very impressed by the positive feedback internally and externally about the Chief Officer and his team who was clearly valued and trusted, with a strong ambition to deliver excellent services for Dudley residents. What was less clear to the peer challenge team was the visibility of the whole of adult social care at a corporate and cabinet level, and how performance beyond that of the operational social care delivery element was reviewed, or how opportunities for improvement were recognised and acted upon and how strategic decision-making took place.

On the basis of the information provided to the peer challenge team, the team felt that a more strategic approach would enable the council to exploit the opportunities that social care offers economically, ensure that connectivity between the different responsibilities of the council (including housing and communities services) is optimised to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable. This could improve financial sustainability of revenue budgets overall.

Whilst the peer challenge team saw evidence that performance was regularly reviewed in different areas across the services, it was not always clear that the data presented was coherent and interpreted consistently, which led to the question as to whether there was a consistent and well-understood approach to measuring key outcomes for people and demonstrating that services are efficient and effective. The commissioning analysis of the market is a good example of a positive shift towards the use of intelligence to inform decision making. Overall the council might benefit from a review of all the performance reporting and consider whether, beyond the national reporting metrics, it is utilising the right indicators to best measure improvement towards its stated aspirations for adult social care.

Effective partnership working and leading in a collaborative manner to effect change was evidenced by several people and services that the team met. Of particular note was the work progressed across the hospitals to deliver very significant improvements in delayed discharges of care, and associated with this achievement the significant progress Dudley Council has made to change culture and practice to support health partners. In developing a sustainable plan for the future across the health and social care system, the strong relationships at all levels of management will be very useful.

## **Co-Production and Engagement**

Dudley has a track record of leading in this area, has continued to develop its Local Account and has some excellent examples of involving groups and individuals in service change and improvement. The peer challenge team thought that the co-produced approach to completing the Local Account delivered a good quality product, but it was quite hard to find from a general internet search. Other searches that the peer challenge team undertook on the council's webpages suggests that the accessibility and maintenance of some of the information on the council's web pages, including ensuring clear links to the Local Account, could benefit from review.

The Disability in Action group, the People's Network and the willingness to include a local Expert by Experience in the Peer Challenge team were all evidence of the strong ongoing commitment to working closely with people and their families. A range of staff who the peer challenge team saw, including day services staff and those in the Carers' Hub, demonstrated their commitment to engaging with people regularly and designing how changes happen with those who use services and their families. The hospital staff also reported that they regularly seek feedback on the service experience from people who have been discharged from services.

The reporting of experience and outcomes and how this supports continuous improvement could be developed further, with this rich qualitative data brought together and utilised alongside some of the more numerical data to gain an accurate picture of the impact of adult social care services across the wide range of provision. This could be utilised as part of strengthening the performance / outcomes management approach as outlined earlier. In partnership working, it is also worth reviewing where national metrics are being used as to whether they are providing the insights that are most needed. For example, a metric on 'Making Safeguarding Personal' is only giving a partial glimpse of whether people have had a positive experience.

The commissioning directorate has clear plans to make a shift towards a new model of domiciliary care provision, one that is outcome based and much more person centred and using a strengths-based approach. This development is very ambitious and represents a significant transformational change. The peer challenge team noted from the information provided that the new model will require significant business system changes (such as those associated with payments) and these new specifications will need carefully identifying and incorporating into the plans associated with the potential new social care IT system. In addition, the proposed new model would also require very significant cultural, practice and process changes in social work operations, with health partners and in particular with market providers. This will require the council to consider carefully how such a magnitude of change will be project-managed across a number of different areas of the council and with partners. The associated element of how this change management will be resourced in terms of time and capacity is also an essential consideration. The plans present as innovative and with great potential, however, the peer challenge team were concerned that there did not yet seem to be an appreciation across all of the relevant services that would be affected, of the scale and complexity of rolling out such an ambitious major development and suggest this is an area for attention if the timescales for delivery are pressing.

### **Dudley Disability Service**

When setting the KLOE, the council acknowledged that this is a very new service, but the peer challenge team felt that it had made a strong start with an effective leadership and management

starting to have a real impact on outcomes for individuals. This was evidenced by the reports from some representatives of ParentCarers who said they had already noticed a reduction in the amount of time they had to repeat their story.

It was clear to the peer challenge team that the organisational structures were very new, and different working practises, cultures and approaches still existed, but with a leadership model focused on outcomes and values. There was a clear understanding that in order to develop a single vision for the ambitions of the new model, further changes were needed to both cultural and decision-making aspects.

The importance of this service to offer the potential to deliver a financially sustainable social care model can not be over-estimated and the council might wish to reflect on whether more focus, through the opportunity to confirm an overarching strategic vision which is fully owned by the leadership of both Children's and Adults' Services and delivering on a few key priorities, might support accelerating the pace of change in this very new service.

The peer challenge team felt this service had great potential to deliver change in the number of young people with disability entering into employment, living in the right accommodation and having the skills to live well. This would support people to live happier lives and was something the team heard from some service users attending day services they wanted to achieve but didn't feel the current service offer was necessarily geared up to deliver. These improvements on outcomes would also have an economic benefit to Dudley and prevent further cost to social care revenue budgets.

## **Opportunities**

The team identified six key opportunities that it felt the council might want to consider going forward:

Via strengthening your strategic vision and overarching direction-setting for adult social care, harness the whole council resources to ensure that a sustainable adult social care model is achievable as part of the medium term financial strategy and maximise the opportunities for service users, carers and communities, as well as health and social care sector providers to become involved in designing the most effective and efficient way of delivering care and support.

As part of the above, further develop the Dudley health and social care integration vision, ensuring that corporate and partnership transformation plans make the best use of the 'Dudley pound' and its ability to contribute to the delivery of economic wealth and health and wellbeing of Dudley residents.

Cement your positive reputation by further appreciating and profiling the great job you do in adult social care operations, ensuring that you utilise this to ensure your partners commit to their part of delivering a financially sustainable and outcome based model for the future.

Prioritise your prevention investment to make sure your model is sustainable and you are able to understand where you are getting the best return on your investment from a financial and outcomes-based perspective.

Build on the emerging evidence from the Dudley Disability Service to give focus to the importance of setting the right governance, outcomes and culture across all parts of the adult social care system and ensure you are utilising the full breadth of your co-production and engagement offer as part of your performance and outcomes management approach.

Strengthen the connection and planning between key functions which deliver or support adult social care. This includes activities such as housing, commissioning, and commercial procurement. This will enhance your current strong performance and mitigate the risk of rising adult social care cost and demand and will also maximise reputational gain.

## **Conclusion**

I would like to thank all the people who participated in the peer challenge, both within the council and also its partners and stakeholders, for giving their time to meet with us and share their thoughts. There were many positive areas of good practice and policy, which we will share across the West Midlands. The energy and enthusiasm politically and from officers to focus on delivering improved outcomes for local people was tangible in both the written evidence and particularly from all of the people the peer challenge team met.

In line with the West Midlands peer challenge approach, we would ask that the council considers the recommendations, develops an action plan in response, and in approximately March 2019 a review of progress takes place through a discussion between the Lead Director (DASS) and myself. It is also agreed in the West Midlands that councils will publish their peer challenge final letter and subsequent action plan to demonstrate its commitment to sector led improvement.

We hope that you regard the comments and recommendations the peer challenge team has made as being constructive and helpful. We have learnt from the process ourselves and we have really appreciated the opportunity to take away some good examples of care and support that, with your permission, we can share with councils across the West Midlands. On behalf of the peer challenge team, I would like to thank you for hosting this peer challenge and for working so positively with us. If you have any points that you would like clarifying please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Yours sincerely**



**Jenny Wood**  
**Director**  
**Adult Care & Support**