

Local Members Interest
Nil

Health Select Committee – Monday 06 July 2020

The COVID-19 Pandemic and potential impact on Mental Wellbeing

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that:

- a. Members of the Committee to consider the content of this paper for further discussion

Report

What impact do we think the COVID-19 Pandemic may be having on people's mental wellbeing?

1. Globally, mental health is being challenged like never before by COVID-19. Whilst there are many uncertainties about how the pandemic will progress, we assume that the impact on the mental health and psychosocial well-being of those most affected will be significant¹. We don't yet know what this may look like for us in Staffordshire.

That said, we have been able to gather some information at a national level, as follows:

- 49% of people report feeling more anxious/depressed
 - 38% have slept less/less well
 - 35% have eaten more/less healthy food
 - 19% have drunk more alcohol; and
 - 19% have argued more with those they live with².
2. The Centre for Mental Health produced a paper in May 2020 forecasting mental health needs and risks in the UK. This paper outlined that the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to lead to an increase in mental ill health, as a result of both the illness itself and the measures being taken to protect people from the virus.
 3. As we look to recover from the pandemic, 'coronavirus fear' is a considerable issue, with the public reporting concern about returning to 'normal' - 61% for using public transport, 61% for going to bars and restaurants, 48% for children returning to school, 43% using shops (non-supermarkets) and 35% willing to

¹ The Impact of COVID-19 on Global Mental Health, a brief, 2020

² <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/life-under-lockdown-coronavirus-uk>

return to place of work.³ 67% of parents reported concerns about the long-term impact of the pandemic on their child's mental health⁴

4. A study conducted by the University of Oxford (April 2020) indicated that as many as one in five primary age children are afraid to leave their homes and are worried there will not be enough food to eat during the pandemic. However, that same study also found that for a small number of young people their mental health had improved. Due to having a difficult relationship with school, feeling positive about the support from friends, and finding that their own anxiety is shared by others.
5. Young Minds conducted a survey of 2,111 young people with a history of mental health needs between 20th – 25th March. The top 3 concerns identified by young people involved in the survey were:
 - a. Isolation / loneliness
 - b. Not having enough food / supplies
 - c. Managing mental health / mental health deteriorating
6. In terms of suicides, we do not have any evidence yet to suggest a change in our local rates. However, work is being done to progress the delivery of our local prevention plans.
7. Society has experienced bereavement (both Covid-19 and from other causes) without being able to grieve in the usual manner; funerals happening in isolation and people grieving alone, cut off from their usual support networks.
8. To date, the evidence of the impact of Covid-19 on the Adult Social Care sector & workforce has been mainly measured in relation to:
 - Care home resident mortality – captured through CQC statistics
 - Wider mortality of those in receipt of adult social care support
 - The impact of the pandemic on the mortality of the essential worker workforce
9. Poor mental health is a key underlying cause for many other issues, such as risk-taking behaviour, domestic abuse, child neglect, unemployment and homelessness. Anecdotally, we believe that households/families, have also begun to experience financial hardship as a result of the 'lockdown'.

What are we doing in Staffordshire to try and mitigate any potential impact?

10. A variety of support has been and continues to be made available to people across Staffordshire, in order try and mitigate any negative impacts from the Coronavirus pandemic, on their health and wellbeing.

³ <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-new-survey-suggests-uk-public-supports-a-long-lockdown-136767>

⁴ <https://youngminds.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/parent-survey-reveals-widespread-concerns-about-mental-health-impact-of-covid-19-on-young-people-s-mental-health/>

General Population

11. Promotion of our County Council Coronavirus Kindness Campaign, providing people with helpful information about how to stay well (physically & mentally) during the pandemic.
12. Staffordshire Connects (our online service directory) offers several digital support tools to enable residents to find information. Our Reading Friends Service provided by Staffordshire Library staff is also available to anyone who may be feeling lonely and would like the chance to chat.

Clinically extremely vulnerable 'Shielded' cohort & those with serious illnesses

13. As above, available to the general population & support with access to emergency food parcels (for those with special dietary needs), and links with local voluntary sector support to help with other tasks (including befriending, in some cases)

Care clients & Care Providers

14. Social care practitioners continuing to support existing clients using telephone and virtual means, for assessments and welfare checks.
15. Information for Providers '[Other help for Providers](#)' webpages have been developed with links to national adult social care guidance from the Department of Health & Social Care.

Staffordshire County Council Staff & Social Care Workforce

16. As above, the Other help for Providers' webpages includes information, advice & guidance for staff.
17. Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust (MPFT) & North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust have launched a confidential staff support line for all social care, NHS and care home workers, operated by the Samaritans, which is free to access from 7am to 11pm, seven days a week.
18. Support for staff has also been made available in a variety of ways such as weekly newsletters, information on intranet pages and executive led engagement sessions.
19. A new staff learning platform called iLearn has also been developed, which includes a variety of resources to help staff with their wellbeing, as well as opportunities for continued development.

Children, young people & families

20. A jointly commissioned emotional health & wellbeing service for children & young people commenced on the 1st April 2020. The service has 'digital' as a core element of their service offer.

21. Mental Health Support Teams in schools, provided by North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust in the Staffordshire Moorlands and Newcastle-under-Lyme and by the Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT) in East Staffordshire, have continued to operate and support children & young people.
22. Virtual Family Hubs developed in all 8 districts have provided a point of access for our most vulnerable children, young people, and families.
23. The commissioned Families Health & Wellbeing service (health visitors and school nurses), delivered by MPFT has continued to operate adhering to national guidelines. Maternal mental health is a key component of mandated health visitor contacts and has continued to be assessed.
24. A regular e-newsletter is planned for Staffordshire (& Stoke) schools regarding emotional wellbeing & mental health and will include CAMHS, commissioned tier 2 providers, the Police and Keele University.
25. Whilst a great deal is being done across the county to try and support people's resilience towards the Coronavirus pandemic, we don't yet know what the true impact has been on people's lives and their wellbeing.

Points for discussion

26. Globally, mental health is being challenged like never before by COVID-19. Whilst there are many uncertainties about how the pandemic will progress, we assume that the impact on the mental health and psychosocial well-being of those most affected will be significant. We don't yet know what this may look like for us in Staffordshire.
27. Who may be affected?
 - a. People with an existing mental health need; and
 - b. The general population with their own circumstances
28. Mental health is a fundamental part of people's wellbeing and has been challenging our communities for years. The pandemic poses additional risks & threats for people.
29. Many of the 'wider determinants' of public health such as housing, education, employment & relationships can improve a person's mental health, but they can also contribute towards its decline. The pandemic has disrupted all aspects of people's lives and will take a great deal of time to recover from.
30. No single organisation has all the answers. The issue of poor mental health requires a system approach to manage it and ultimately prevent it.
31. The Pandemic may also have had a positive impact on some people's mental wellbeing from both a personal & professional point of view.

Link to Strategic Plan

Inspire healthy, independent living & Support Children and Families to look after themselves, stay safe & well

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

NA

Community Impact

NA

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Discussion Point PowerPoint Slide (attached)

Contact Details

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