

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 January 2024

Report by Clerk

NATIONAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – ADULT MENTAL HEALTH IN SCOTLAND

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To provide information on the Audit Scotland report, *Adult Mental Health in Scotland*.

RECOMMENDATION

2. It is recommended that the Committee considers the report.

BACKGROUND

3. A copy of the Audit Scotland report, [Adult Mental Health in Scotland](#) published in September 2023, has already been circulated to all Audit and Scrutiny Committee Members. Under the Committee's specialisation arrangements, the Member leading the review of this particular report is Councillor Edlin.

4. The Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership, has provided comments on the report, which are as submitted to the Performance and Audit Committee of the Integration Joint Board (IJB) on 22 November 2023. A copy of that feedback is attached (see Appendix A).

RECOMMENDATION

5. It is recommended that the Committee considers the report.

Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

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Background Papers:-

1. Audit Scotland report on [Adult Mental Health in Scotland](#)

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP**PERFORMANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE****22 November 2023****Report by Chief Officer****AUDIT SCOTLAND REPORT: ADULT MENTAL HEALTH****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to share and provide local context to the recent Audit Scotland report on adult mental health in Scotland, which was prepared and published by Audit Scotland in September 2023 and makes a number of recommendations for Integration Joint Boards, NHS Board, Council and the Scottish Government.

RECOMMENDATION

2. The Performance and Audit Committee is asked to note the report.

BACKGROUND

3. Audit Scotland audit 225 public bodies to provide independent assurance that public money is spent properly, efficiently and effectively. They provide services to the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission. The Accounts Commission holds councils and other local government bodies in Scotland to account and helps them improve by reporting to the public on their performance.
4. Audit Scotland produce a number of reports each year and in September 2023 published a report on Adult Mental Health which is included at Appendix 1 for information. This performance audit looks at how effectively mental health services for adults in Scotland are being delivered and focuses on progress made since the Scottish Government published its Mental Health Strategy 2017–2027.

REPORT

5. Detail relating to each of the recommendations is contained within the Audit Scotland Report itself, this report summarises the four key messages from the report and provides an overview of East Renfrewshire context and approach including where our delivery of services is aligned to Board wide strategy and work with our fellow HSCPs.

6. The Audit Scotland report says:

- Funding for adult mental health services has increased significantly since 2017. But a lack of data makes it hard to see what impact this increased spending has had. Accessing services remains slow and complicated for many people. The Covid-19 pandemic made this situation worse, particularly limiting access to face-to-face support. NHS boards are still not all routinely offering face-to-face appointments as a choice. The mental health workforce is under pressure, with high vacancy rates and turnover. And progress towards increasing the mental health support available from primary care, which is essential to improving access and relieving pressure on specialist services, has been delayed.
- Accessing mental healthcare is more difficult for some people, for instance people from ethnic minorities, people living in rural areas and people living in poverty. People living in the most deprived areas are also three times more likely to end up in hospital for mental health issues than those in the least deprived areas. This is a long-standing problem and progress in tackling it has been slow. Mental health services cannot address this alone, and they are not yet working closely enough with other sectors, such as housing, welfare, and employability support services, to address and prevent some of the causes of poor mental health.
- The Scottish Government does not have sufficient oversight of most adult mental health services because of a lack of information. It does not measure the quality of care or the outcomes for people receiving it. The Scottish Government focuses on only waiting times for psychological therapies to assess how adult mental health and wellbeing services are performing. Performance against this measure has improved, but NHS boards are still struggling to meet waiting times standards. The system is fragmented, and accountability is complex, with multiple bodies involved in funding and providing mental health services. This causes complications and delays in developing services that focus on individuals' needs.
- The Scottish Government's progress against commitments in its Mental Health Strategy 2017–2027 is mixed. It has since made further financial, operational and workforce commitments, but it is not currently on track to achieve them. These include increasing mental health funding by 25 per cent, ensuring that ten per cent of front-line health spending is on mental health, and giving all GP practices access to primary care mental health and wellbeing services.

7. The report is arranged into four parts:-

- Part 1. Access to mental health support and services
- Part 2. Progress towards improving mental health services
- Part 3. How well resources for adult mental health are managed
- Part 4. Plans and strategic direction.

8. Findings and recommendations are based on evidence gathered through document review, data analysis, interviews and focus groups as well as more in-depth fieldwork in Grampian, Aberdeenshire and Moray, and Lanarkshire to better understand local pressures and challenges, and to highlight areas of good practice.

9. The report noted that supporting and improving mental health and wellbeing is a significant public health challenge that requires a coordinated response from a wide range of organisations. The report makes a number of recommendations for Scottish Government, Integration Joint Boards, NHS Boards and Councils to take forward. They recommended that:-
- The Scottish Government should:
 - *implement the recommendations of the independent evaluation of the Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) programme as part of rolling out the DBI programme across Scotland by March 2024*
 - *before the end of 2023, publish its guidance on measuring and evaluating outcomes from mental health and wellbeing services in primary care, which was expected to be published in April 2022*
 - *publish a costed delivery plan, as soon as possible, setting out the funding and workforce needed to establish and accommodate primary care mental health and wellbeing services across Scotland by 2026, including how these services will work with other sectors to provide holistic, person-centred support*
 - *in the next 12 months, work with Public Health Scotland to start routinely publishing, at least quarterly, how the Scottish Government's psychological therapies specification and quality standards for secondary mental health services are improving the experiences and outcomes for people who use these services.*
 - *in the next 12 months, work with Public Health Scotland to start routinely publishing psychological therapies performance at Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) level as well as NHS board level to improve transparency and accountability for psychological therapies services.*
 - Scottish Government and Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) should:
 - *urgently progress work to improve the availability, quality, and use of financial, operational and workforce data so that:*
 - *service and workforce planning, particularly in primary, community, and social care, is based on accurate measures of existing provision and demand*
 - *information can be shared between health and social care partners more easily*
 - *they can routinely measure, monitor and report on the quality of mental health services and patient outcomes; the difference that investment is making to patients' outcomes; and how much is being invested in preventative programmes of work and their impact.*
10. Within East Renfrewshire our Mental Health and Recovery Planning Group recognises the importance of quantitative and qualitative data to assist in planning both in terms of workforce and in service delivery with a particular focus on improving patient experience.
11. As an example our local data capture goes beyond compliance with psychological therapies and we have created a local dashboard which measures demand and capacity, we have also undertaken work to better understand where patients are accessing multiple services in an effort to highlight where better integration is needed to increase efficiency and achieve a smoother journey across the service areas. This in turn is assisting us to make service changes to both pathways and workforce deployment / recruitment and future planning.

- IJBs, HSCPs and NHS boards should:
 - *provide people with a choice about whether they access mental health services remotely or face-to-face, in line with the commitment in the Digital Health and Care Strategy.*
12. In East Renfrewshire the advent of wider digital access as a result of the pandemic has largely been positive. Prior to the pandemic this was not an option for patients but we recognise this does not suit everyone, staff included. We have continued to offer choice of appointments, there are however occasions where this may be limited based on a range of factors such as infection control but, we work to ensure when contingencies are required we quickly return to normal operations.
- IJBs and councils should:
 - *urgently improve how mental health, primary care, housing, employability, and welfare support services work together to address and prevent the causes of poor mental health, by developing shared goals and targets, sharing data and jointly funding services.*
13. Integration, working together and collaboration is at the heart of what we do in East Renfrewshire and our Mental Health and Recovery Planning Group is made up of a wide range of services from within and outwith the mental health setting. However there is always more to do and we recognise this. Our strategic planning incorporates the importance of stronger integrated and partnership working but this is something which is achieved by close operational links and day to day management which is a key focus for us.
14. In addition to the points above, East Renfrewshire is working on a range of priorities which are aligned to the recommendations made in the audit Scotland report, including:-
- Our Peer Support and Lived experience panels are now embedded and helping us to shape all local services.
 - Progress has been made against the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Mental Health Strategy 2018 – 2023 which has been refreshed for 2023-2028. An update on the refresh is being presented to the IJB at its meeting on 22 November 2023 which includes further detail on the ongoing work to support the delivery of the strategy at a local level.
 - During the pandemic we established a number of remote services and we continue to offer these alongside face to face and group appointments.
 - Our workforce planning is taking account of the recruitment and retention issues experienced by all HSCPs. We have developed a local plan to take account of imminent retirements of senior staff with a focus on how we build resilience and prepare for these changes. We are also looking at the roles and skill mix for all professions and have managed a very challenging situation in relation to medical staff vacancies by investing other disciplines such as pharmacy.
 - We have, by investing in local staff development increased our Mental Health Officer numbers and aim to continue this approach.
 - We are working to take forward the Distress Brief Interventions programme with a view to investing funding with our third sector partners.

CONCLUSIONS

15. There is, without question, multiple areas of activity related to improvement in mental health services at a national, NHS Board and local level. This can be challenging to navigate for a smaller HSCP. This is particularly challenging when funding is ring fenced and there is limited flexibility to focus on local issues which may differ from other areas. We can however, because of our size link quickly and effectively with internal and external partners and this has stood us in good stead.
16. An important measure is our admissions to inpatient mental health services which is relatively low, we have also not experienced any delayed discharges in Mental Health for a considerable period which demonstrates our commitment to supporting people at home and ensuring that when hospital is needed people are supported to get home as soon as they are ready.
17. The report acknowledges that the independent review of mental health law in Scotland which published its final report in September 2022, along with the Scottish Government's response in June 2023 may lead to changes in mental health law in future, this will require significant implementation.
18. The Audit Scotland Report provides a useful overview of services across Scotland and provides us with key information on which to benchmark ourselves. Our Mental Health and Recovery Planning and Adult Services Governance Groups will take account of the recommendations set out here, we will continue to work with Board wide colleagues on wider NHS GGC strategy and on the wide range of directives we receive from Scottish Government. We will however continue to put this in the context of what matters to the people of East Renfrewshire and our HSCP Strategic Plan reflects our mental health and recovery priorities based on the needs and priorities of the population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

19. The Performance and Audit Committee is asked to note the report.

REPORT AUTHOR AND PERSON TO CONTACT

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1 November 2023

Chief Officer, IJB: Julie Murray

BACKGROUND PAPERS

IJB Paper: 22.11.2023: A Refresh of the Strategy for Mental Health Services in Greater Glasgow & Clyde 2023-2028

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