
Annual General Meeting (AGM) Questions

27 September 2023

The Let's Connect Wellbeing Network is a fabulous service which I am sure is highly valued and makes a big difference to people. Does it work alongside or with Primary Care Social Prescribers (Community Connectors)?

Sally Gomme, Wellbeing Network Team Leader, replied:

In our intention and in an ideal world, we would be very well embedded with GP surgeries and social prescribers but doing that in the development phase has been a bit slow. But absolutely that's part of the core model and we're building relationships with social prescribers across all GP surgeries and community connectors. It's important to us that we work in an integrated way with all those roles. Some of them sit within Berkshire Healthcare and some sit within GP surgeries and we've done a lot of groundwork from that, and we've probably learned quite a lot of shortcut ways to do that going forward across the rest of Berkshire as well.

What is your view of more volunteers in community services, in light of the debate about Physician Associates in the media at the moment?

Minno Irani, Medical Director, replied:

There is absolutely no doubt that volunteers play a very important role in all community services, including health services. Now, I won't go into the debate about physician associates in the media because that is a media debate and different professional groups. All I can say is that Berkshire Healthcare trained physician associates who come from Reading University for placements and training in mental health and physical health are very valuable members of our teams and we would always welcome them as future employees in Berkshire Healthcare. I hope that gives you the assurance that we do value all professional groups and volunteers in the organisation.

We are running pilots of this with local surgeries by providing former SJA volunteers with DBS, PGDs and Clinical overview in place.

Minno Irani, Medical Director, replied:

We are not general providers of vaccines to patients in their own homes unless we are visiting them for other purposes and the same would be for blood tests and routine observations; for any further discussions please contact Debbie Fulton our Director Nursing and Therapies.

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For many years, the CAMHS service in the Wokingham area has been subject to criticism. Is there any prospect of an improvement in service provision?

Tehmeena Ajmal, Chief Operating Officer:

We do include a range of activities within our child, adolescent and mental health services. As an example, we offer urgent and crisis support for young people who need support very quickly, very urgently in and out of hours. We have something called our Phoenix team which provides support in the community for young people who have a range of complex needs with the view to preventing the need for an admission into an inpatient unit. The service group are very proud of this, and other partner providers have been asking for some information because they're keen to set up similar arrangement for themselves.

Then we have something called our Thrive Model which has got 4 components to it, 'offering advice', 'getting help', 'getting more help' and 'getting risk support'. It offers a range of interventions and support depending on the complexity or severity of need of the young person. In Wokingham we are commissioned by Wokingham Borough Council to provide 'getting help' and they have recently recommissioned us and they've allowed us to provide even more support into that level of the service, which is extremely good news.

Then our integrated care boards, which commission some of our other children's services are developing additional support for young people. So, they have a new service across the whole of the Thames Valley, supporting children with complex needs. We're also internally implementing some new pathways, because we recognise some children are being supported by more than one team and that can be quite challenging to coordinate, so it's a very important piece of work for us that we make it very easy for children and their families to be supported across multiple teams.

Finally, in terms of our ADHD and autism assessment services, we have put a significant amount of work into those services to reduce the length of time that people are waiting for an assessment. And what we're trying to do in the meantime is give people really good access to information, advice, support and guidance, so that they can start to identify some strategies and support tools for themselves, while they're waiting for a formal diagnosis.
