



Report To:	OVERVIEW PANEL
Date:	25 July 2022
Scrutiny Chair / Reporting Officer:	Councillor Naila Sharif – Chair of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel Sarah Threlfall - Director of Transformation
Subject:	ASSURANCE REVIEW OF LGSCO FOCUS REPORT – UNPRECEDENTED PRESSURE: LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS ABOUT COUNCIL AND CARE PROVIDER ACTIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
Report Summary:	To receive for information, a service response on shared learning detailed within the LGSCO focus report on learning from complaints about council and care provider actions. Scrutiny Panels will routinely review LGSCO decisions, with shared learning reported to services in order to gain assurances of practice, delivery and outcomes for residents and service users.
Recommendations:	That Overview Panel is asked to note the content of the report and ongoing activity of the Scrutiny Panels to review LGSCO decisions to inform and improve local service delivery.
Links to Corporate Plan:	The work of Scrutiny is closely linked to the Council’s Corporate Plan Priorities. Scrutiny activity seeks to support effective decision making and improvement outcomes across Tameside.
Policy Implications:	Scrutiny work programmes comprise activity that seeks to check the effective implementation of the council policy and if appropriate make recommendations to the Executive with regard to development, performance monitoring, outcomes and value for money.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any changes to policy or service delivery arising from the learning set out in this report will need to be accommodated within existing budgets or subject to a separate report.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	The attached review provides helpful learning and reflection for the council to assist the continued performance improvements and service development.
Risk Management:	Regular updates to Overview Panel provide assurance that Scrutiny is progressing with an effective work programme, supporting good decision making and service improvement.
Access to Information:	The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Paul Radcliffe, Policy and Strategy Lead by:  Telephone:0161 342 2199  e-mail: paul.radcliffe@tameside.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is the final stage for complaints about councils and other organisations responsible for the provision of public services. The LGSCO also investigates complaints about adult social care providers including care homes and home care agencies. A complaint about an organisation or partner acting on behalf of a council or authority should also be signposted to the ombudsman.
- 1.2 LGSCO Focus Reports highlight subjects or systemic issues arising from case work. This routinely takes the form of shared learning opportunities and methods aimed to improve the approach and management of complaints. The reports make recommendations on good practice to help other authorities and care providers to review internal process and address areas where improvements can be made. The focus reports contribute to public policy debates and have more recently included information and tools for elected members to scrutinise local services and to inform work priorities.
- 1.3 Complaints raised by the public and service users can be an important source of information to help councillors identify issues that are affecting local people. Complaints can therefore play a key part in supporting the scrutiny of public services. In addition to current methods used to inform work priorities, Scrutiny will review decisions made by the LGSCO on a regular basis, to inform in-year work priorities. This will also contribute to the evidence gathered throughout the municipal year when developing the annual work programmes.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel has made a formal request to the Executive Member for Adult Services, to review a LGSCO Focus Report and to collate a service response to a number of questions aimed to improve local accountability.
- 2.2 The report titled – *Unprecedented pressure: Learning from complaints about council and care provider actions during the Covid-19 pandemic*, was published in February 2022.
- 2.3 In May 2020, the ombudsman issued a short guide to council's and care providers, setting out the approach to considering complaints about the delivery of services during Covid-19. The guide pulled together learning from Covid-19 casework under six principles of good administration and practice.
 - Getting it right (process and record keeping)
 - Being service-user focused
 - Being open and accountable
 - Acting fairly and proportionately
 - Putting things right (inform, consider, explain)
 - Seeking continuous improvement
- 2.4 The focus report summarises common issues identified through cases on which the ombudsman carried out a full investigation. It also provides headline figures and trends from those cases where initial assessment did not prompt a full investigation.
- 2.5 At the end of March 2020, the ombudsman recognised the impact the pandemic was having on councils and care providers, with a decision made to suspend casework investigations. Active investigations restarted after the initial pause, with analysis in the report covering a period of June 2020 to November 2021.
- 2.6 The main categories of Covid-19 complaints investigated are:
 - Benefits and Tax (41%)
 - Adult Social Care (20%)
 - Education and Children's Services (12%)

- 2.7 Focus reports promote local accountability and include a comprehensive set of questions for Scrutiny to seek assurance at a local level. The service response (**APPENDIX 1**), responds directly to questions listed on pages 44 of the focus report (**APPENDIX 2**). The Scrutiny Panel requested that a response of the Executive was to consider and review questions in connection to Adult Services and care provision in Tameside.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 As set out on the front of the report.