

**Report to Health Scrutiny Committee**

## **Women and Disadvantage: Mental Health**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

This report follows up on the recommendations in the report to Health and Scrutiny Committee in October which sought to explore a number of issues pertaining to women's disadvantage – including access to mental health services.

The paper outlines mental health service provision in the borough and sets the context for further analysis and exploration of women's access to gender-specific services.

### **Recommendations**

This report provides a broad, high level introduction to mental health services in the borough and sets the strategic context.

Members are asked to note the report and consider the further analysis of the provision of mental health services for women within this context

## **Women and Disadvantage: Mental Health**

### **1 Background and Policy Context**

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> October, members considered a paper which outlined several ways in which women faced disadvantage in Oldham, and indeed in wider society.
- 1.2 Amongst the issues identified, women's access to mental health services was regarded as an area of priority and focus, based upon concerns about the impact of the pandemic on mental health, and research in relation to barriers to women's economic empowerment carried out in Oldham by Oxfam and Inspire Women (2019).
- 1.3 Members agreed to support further exploration of women's disadvantage in Oldham in relation to access to mental health service provision. It was agreed that this research would include:
- the collation, analysis and interpretation of any existing data and intelligence;
  - the engagement of women with lived experience in the development of this evidence base and
  - identification of any future work that may be needed in respond to any issues raised

### **2 Current Position**

- 2.1 In relation to mental health, initial conversations with the Director of Public Health, and colleagues within both Public Health and Oldham Cares Mental Health Commissioning Services have been helpful in providing an insight into the mental health service offer in the borough; summarised below.
- 2.2 Demand for mental health services has increased during the pandemic and waiting times for people needing to access help have increased. It is felt that this is in part because people couldn't access the same level of support through their GP's during the lockdown. There is no evidence of a gender-bias in this demand.
- 2.3 It is important to note that Mental Health services are currently being re-designed to provide access at a place-based level; including the co-location of a mental health team within each of the 5 Primary Care Network clusters. This will enable people seeking support with their mental health to access early help.
- 2.4 80% of GP's in the borough have an accredited Improved Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) practitioner, such as a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner, to provide early support for people presenting with low-level mental health disorders.
- 2.5 **Gender-specific services**
- 2.6 Service provision is on the whole not gender-specific but responsive to the evidence of need and demand, guided by the principles of person-centred care.
- 2.7 In relation to mental health service commissioning, gender-specific service provision for women is focused on perinatal and maternity services.

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- 2.8 Differential need and demand for mental health services is recognised at a population health level. Commissioning does for example, reflect the evidence that more men than women are likely to die by suicide and more young women than men are likely to self-harm.
  - 2.9 Within commissioned services, provided for example by TOG Mind or Healthy Minds, women can access women only professional and peer-to peer support. This is particularly important in providing culturally appropriate and sensitive support for women; supporting women who are experiencing domestic abuse or women who are sex-workers.
  - 2.10 Mental health care and support is also provided by services that are not commissioned through Mental Health - but are accessed within other commissioned services including for example Drug and Alcohol services. These services can provide mental health clients with gender-specific support when needed.
  - 2.11 Other programmes such as the Emotional Health and Mental Wellbeing programme which supports the mental health of children and young people in school, can offer access to gender specific support where required.
  - 2.12 Evidence also shows that women are more likely to access mental health support through targeted family support and parental wellbeing programmes. Similarly, more women than men (approximately 60/40% split) access psychological care in relation to early stage dementia.
  - 2.13 The role of the VCFSE sector is also important in supporting good mental health in the borough – and a range of organisations provide frontline and wrap-around support to people in mental health difficulty or crisis. This can include providing wrap-around support, signposting - and supporting clients to access and sustain engagement with mental health services.

### **3 Key Issues for Health Scrutiny to Discuss**

- 3.1 This initial, high level research has found that the provision of mental health services is not only very complex but undergoing transformational change as part of the Living Well programme across Greater Manchester.
- 3.2 A round-table discussion which will focus on the Council's role in supporting good mental health in the borough is currently being considered by Cllr Chauhan, and Dr Keith Jeffery, Clinical Director for Mental Health for NHS Oldham CCG, mental health care. Whilst there are no details as yet, it is understood that the intention is to raise the profile of services to support mental health and wellbeing in Oldham, discuss work currently being undertaken and future opportunities to improve mental health and wellbeing in the borough.

### **4 Key Questions for Health Scrutiny to Consider**

- 4.1 Members may wish to consider how to best take forward the work to ensure that women can access mental health services in the light of the above. It may be helpful to plug in the work in relation to women's disadvantage to this bigger conversation; rather than consider it as a separate issue.

### **5. Links to Corporate Outcomes**

- 5.1 The proposals contained in the report enable delivery against the Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy; Anti-Poverty Action Plan and, in terms of addressing the impacts of the pandemic, the Council's Covid 19 Recovery Strategy. They also aim to address issues in relation to women's mental health raised at the Women's Taskforce.

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5.2 The proposals advocate working with people with lived experience of mental health illness and poverty to develop and find solutions and as such align with the Council's Co-operative Agenda.

5.3 The proposals will contribute to the achievement of the outcomes to improve healthy life expectancy in Oldham detailed in the borough's Locality Plan for Health and Social Care Transformation November 2019 – March 2024.

## 6 **Additional Supporting Information**

6.1 A summary of current mental health provision in the borough is attached in Appendix 1

## 7 **Consultation**

7.1 This report is for Committee's consideration and support only at this stage. Any financial and/or legal implications will be identified once the actions proposed have been approved and taken forward.

## 8 **Appendices**

8.1 Draft Summary diagram of Mental Health Provision for Adults and Children and Young People( Appendix 1)