

Annie Hudson
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By Email

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Date: 27 November 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Stronger Somerset

We are writing to you following our meeting with Kim Curry and Annie Hudson concerning your proposal for Stronger Somerset.

During our meeting you articulated that you were keen to adopt a similar model of Public Health to Dorset; with one public health function to cover the whole of Somerset. This is a sensible approach and would help to ensure health improvement and that any response to threats are not hampered by a lack of capacity or specialist skills.

The model put forward by Stronger Somerset proposed the establishment of five organisations that would require specialist public health input. As the DPH role has a statutory duty to act as an independent advocate for the public's health and wellbeing, we rely heavily on being able to articulate need and influence across the system at the most senior level. In order to be effective in this across this many organisations, as discussed there would need to be investment in senior public health capacity.

We are now at a point in time where the system as a whole, and particularly Somerset County Council, has placed considerable emphasis on an increased focus on prevention. The organisation has embarked on a transformation programme focussed on Improving Lives with prevention at its heart. Significant investment has been allocated to it through initiatives such as the Prevention Fund and Health and Wellbeing Funds. After such significant, joined up progress, it would be a retrograde step should this focus be lost, or we were not able to shape this transformation to improve the public's health.

The Public Health team in Somerset is considered a national example of excellence, in particular for our work around Public Mental Health for which we were awarded the prestigious Sarah Stewart Brown Award by the Faculty of Public Health. Similarly, the team has a very strong emphasis on training and development of new public health talent and has again been awarded 'Excellent' as a Public Health Centre for speciality training by the Severn Deanery. Specialist Registrars request for a training placement in Somerset due to the reputation of the team and the standard of the work. To continue to attract excellent staff and improve the health of the Somerset population, it is imperative that this expertise is able, and supported to flourish even further under any new arrangements that may occur.

Moving on to Adult social care, during our meeting, you described local community-based support around primary care networks as though it is a new way of working. In Somerset we have been nationally recognised for our approach to neighbourhood working. Our excellent and creative strengths-based practise is an example of this, as is our development of alternative community solutions from preventative and early intervention services (such as village and community agents) to micro-providers. This has strengthened further during the last year by excellent partnership working with our community health colleagues, our Primary Care Networks, our Voluntary and Third sector. The development of person centred multi-agency teams has enabled us to promote people's independence, link people back into their local communities and to begin to develop Social Prescribing.

The development of the Integrated Intermediate Care Service, with one ringfenced budget across our health and social care system has received national recognition as can be seen in many national publications.

Under the Care Act 2014 the director of ASC has many Statutory responsibilities. One is to ensure that people and their families have a range of high-quality appropriate services. Somerset County Council prides itself on having robust and supportive oversight arrangements in place with our care provider market. The proportion of Good and Outstanding rated care provision in the County exceeds national and regional averages. We work closely in partnership with the Registered Care Providers Association (RCPA), Care Quality Commission (CQC) and NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (Somerset CCG) as part of our routine commissioning activity.

Sadly, we have been made aware of a public meeting that took place earlier this week which included a presentation that was misleading and inaccurate. This presentation used a slide that highlighted the following point *"continued poor review of (care)*

services and no plan to improve." As the Statutory post holder for Adult Social Care in Somerset, I was disappointed and perplexed by these comments. This is not about the model being proposed, but about the statements that are inaccurate and derogatory; not only to the services that are delivered in Somerset, but also to our social care workforce who are working so hard to provide excellent, integrated support to the most vulnerable people in our society.

Somerset's Public Health and Adult Social Care services are recognised nationally as trailblazers. It would be appreciated if the hard work and excellence of local staff teams was recognised accurately in any further public consultation and that this statement is publicly corrected. We would also request that this letter is submitted to each of your full Councils next week and read out for members information.

If you require any further supporting evidence, please don't hesitate to come back to us.

Yours sincerely



Mel Lock
Director of Adults Social Care
Lead Commissioner for
Adults and Health



Trudi Grant
Director of Public Health