

Since I became executive members for adult services and wellbeing everything has been framed by the pandemic. But it is important throughout that period to be looking forward to how we will continue with our service as we move to living with the virus. That includes:

- building on our commitment to become an age friendly community
- Continuing to approve good quality providers to deliver our services
- Opening a new facility at Westgarth to provide respite care for disabled carers and their adults.

As we often say one of the things we look for when trying to provide services like ours is certainty and consistency from decision makers in government. To say that changing regulations have made things tricky over the past period would be to understate. From visiting rules at care homes announced without regulation to an announcement for vaccinations for care home staff met with an about turn it has been tricky to operate in an environment where we meet the latest requirements and can maintain the support of our service users and staff.

### **Vaccination for care Staff**

We had been working with our home care providers to ensure that as many home care staff as possible had been vaccinated before the change in policy. By the time the policy was reversed we had got up to 86% of home care staff having had their first vaccination and 82% having had 2 jabs, the number who had also been boosted was lower. Obviously the need to get care staff vaccinated is less acute now but we will continue to work with providers to support staff to be vaccinated as even with Omicron it remains the best way to ensure you have more mild symptoms and are less transmissible.

### **New Care Home Regulations**

Because of the hugely more transmissible nature of omicron (and the generally less severe outcomes) it has been clear for some time that the current restrictions on care home visits where there are outbreaks were too severe. The new restrictions announced by government on Monday 31 January will mean the isolation period is reduced to 10 days and the limit on visits have been reduced. This will remain an ongoing balance between keeping people safe and allowing families to have important connections.

### **Approved Care Providers**

One of our most recent procurements was the care providers. We have 20 new approved providers and we are currently going through the process of activating some of those contracts. This is a regular process we go through, and in our procurement we are doing what we can to make sure users voices are heard in our choice of providers.

### **Westgarth**

This month we were lucky enough to open the Westgarth care home, this former children's home has been refurbished to offer 12 places for people with different levels of disability and space for the care staff who support them. This is an amazing facility will offer respite care for people who need it. I was proud to visit this site and see the outside space, it's great to be investing in good quality modern space for the future.

## **Age Friendly Calderdale**

At the last council meeting we signed up to be part of the UKs network of Age Friendly Communities. We have done what we can to hit the ground running.