

Context

Our winter pressures and business continuity planning anticipate increased pressures over the winter months.

This preparation ensures that we are prepared to respond to the sort of exceptional demands presented by episodes of severe weather.

This winter we experienced significant exceptional demands as the demands of the swine flu pandemic combined with normal winter pressures and with 2 periods of severe weather (pre Christmas and post Christmas snow).

Priorities

To ensure that Adult Social Care Services continue to operate and assure the safety of vulnerable adults in the community and in residential and nursing homes.

To support the continued safe operation of our acute hospitals

Actions taken

Implemented our business continuity plans that ensured the safety and continuity of service to our most vulnerable service users in the community.

Redeployed staff to the areas of service experiencing the greatest demand.

Redirected staff who could not attend their normal place of work to work centres/tasks that ensured the continued safety of our users.

Provided specialised transport for staff to get into work and to ensure their continued ability to visit vulnerable users in their own homes.

Supported colleagues in the independent care sector (to ensure that they were able to maintain a safe level of service).

Recruited volunteers from across the council to make 'safety visits' to vulnerable adults.

Used the local media to recruit volunteers with 4X4 vehicles to transport staff to work and home visits.

Secured specialist transport and drivers from the Seafront Office and Parks Department (this is just one example of the extraordinary support we received from colleagues across the council).

Identified dedicated staff resources to co-ordinate staff transport within Adult Social Care and across the local health and social care economy.

Identified staff volunteers to provide both an Access Service in the community and a Social Care Assessment Service in the hospital over the weekend of 9th & 10th January with the support of Customer Services.

Established a special conference call facility and schedule of conference calls (24/7) for senior officers in ASC to ensure regular communication for the duration of the severe weather incident. This complimented a similar initiative involving senior managers, across the health and social care economy.

Established direct communication links with colleagues in City Clean to inform priorities re gritting to maintain access to social and health care facilities.

Note: None of the above would have been possible without the extraordinary dedication of our social care staff many of whom worked extended hours, contributed their weekends to ensure the safety of our users, members of home care and residential staff stayed overnight at their work base to ensure their availability for work and staff across the board demonstrated a willingness to work flexibly in the interest of the service.

Lessons Learned

The positive experience of being part of a truly corporate response to exceptional circumstances.

The ability of organisations to work together effectively across the health and social care economy, sharing resources, aligning priorities and solving problems together.

Our business continuity plans ensured that we knew what we had to do and how we should do it. If there was a gap it was in not having the systems in place (or readily in hand) to underpin the action we knew we had to take. These were simple but critical things e.g. quick access to buildings out of hours, being able to change automated IT and telephone systems quickly out of hours, systems for recording and distributing info re volunteers, ready access to up to date volunteer/staffing information.