

REPORT TO: Health and Social Care Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 10th February 2026

REPORTING OFFICER: Head of Service – Quality, Safeguarding and Mental Health

PORTFOLIO: Health and Social Care

SUBJECT: Elected Members Scrutiny Topic Group 2025 – Mental Health – final report

WARD(S) All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To introduce the final report for the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Topic Group for 2025, and consider topic areas for scrutiny for 2026.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) The report be noted;
- 2) Members ratify the action plan for implementation; and
- 3) The theme for the 2026 Scrutiny Topic is discussed and agreed.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Scrutiny Topic Review – Mental Health

- 3.1.1 Scrutiny Topic Reviews are conducted annually by Policy and Performance Boards (PPB) and the Health and Social Care PPB identified for 2025/6 that they wishes to scrutinise Mental Health services across the borough. As a result the Topic Group was formed and a topic brief was agreed in the June 2025 PPB meeting.
- 3.1.2 A key focus of the Scrutiny Topic Review was to examine the services delivered by Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust. The Trust has been commissioned in Halton or the past few years following the of departure of 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Foundation Trust from the region.
- 3.1.3 The first meeting of the Scrutiny Topic Group was in August. It was intended that it would start in July, however speakers for the meetings could not be secured.
- 3.1.4 The Scrutiny Topic Group meetings therefore took place between

August and November, with the final draft being agreed at the final meeting of the Group on 4th December. The agreed final report is given at Appendix One.

- 3.1.5 Councillor Eddie Dourley chaired the Scrutiny Topic Group and Members were asked to attend as part of an open invitation across the duration of the scheduled sessions.
- 3.1.6 Activity during the Scrutiny Topic Review revolved around presentations being brought to Members from different areas of service, in order for them to build a full picture of mental health responses across the borough.
- 3.1.7 Further to this Members additionally conducted two site visits during the Review, one to the SPACE Café in Runcorn and the other to The Brooker Centre. Both visits have comprehensive write-ups in the final report.
- 3.1.8 The Board agreed 14 recommendations in its November meeting, following the final presentation. This has been written up into an action plan, for which a small task and finish group will be formed with representation from the Council, the Integrated Care Board and Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust.
- 3.1.9 The subject of Mental Health covered a wide range of areas and vast amount of information. As such, it's not been possible to give all aspects of performance and related data within the report. Instead the presentations given are incorporated into the report appendices. The report covers the discussions and contributions shared at the Topic Group meetings.
- 3.1.10 The main body of the report gives an overview narrative of services, and key points pulled out of discussions by the Topic Group as broken down by the following headings:
 - Social Care duties under the Mental Health Act 2007
 - Community-based responses and primary care services
 - Crisis response, including suicide prevention
 - Secondary care, including bed-based services
 - Specialist care services
 - Children and Young People's services
- 3.1.11 This is tied together with an introduction and conclusion, along with the usual sections to include in the Topic Review report – Purpose of the report, Membership of the Topic Group, etc.
- 3.1.12 The Board are requested to review the report for final sign off, and to give support for implementation of the action plan.

3.2 **Scrutiny Topic for 2026**

- 3.2.1 At the Scrutiny Topic Group meeting in December, when the 2025 report was finalised, Members discussed option for the 2026 Topic.
- 3.2.2 The following shortlist is presented for Members to discuss and agree:
- 3.2.3 a.) Ageing Well – Public Health lead on a programme of activity and intervention to support people in later life across the borough. During 2025 they re-modelled their intervention approach to develop the 'Stronger for Longer' programme, offering up to 12-weeks of support for those aged 55 and over, to access their community and improve both their mental and physical wellbeing.
- 3.2.4 b.) Teenage Pregnancy – this is proposed as a joint Scrutiny Review with the Children and Young People's PPB. It would look at recent increases in teenage pregnancies, the options being considered in these situations and both the health and education messages which aim to tackle the issue.
- 3.2.5 c.) Drug and Alcohol Addiction – Following on from looking at mental health, Members feel this is perhaps a pertinent area to consider. Scrutiny of this area would look at both health and social care support on offer. This would include services commissioned by Public Health for the treatment and recovery from addiction.
- 3.2.6 Following agreement on a Scrutiny Topic Review theme for 2026 a Topic Brief will be formulated, in discussion with the Review Chair. This will further be presented and ratified by the Board prior to the Topic Group being formed.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The recommendations from the 2025 Scrutiny Review involve activity that needs to be undertaken by the Council, through the Integrated Care Board, and by Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust. As such, a small task and finish group will be formed to ensure all action are being taken forward.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Initially, there were thoughts to be no financial implications for the recommendations to be implemented. However, there is a potential cost in relation to the Zero Suicide Alliance e-learning. This depends on whether the Council want to monitor who has completed the

training. The two options are:

- i. Promote the e-learning with a free to access link. With this option we could state the training is mandatory but we would not be able to monitor this through our Learning and Development function. While staff members could submit completion certification, the team do not have the ad hoc capacity to record this;
- ii. The alternative would be to purchase the sharable content so that they are compatible with the Council's learning management system. This would allow automatic capture of completion of learning on our reporting system. In essence, this involves putting the e-learning on our own platform. The cost submitted for this is currently £7,200 for a three year period.

5.2 Members are requested to indicate how they wish to proceed with this recommendation.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

The Scrutiny Topic Review report aims to look at areas of provision and access points for mental health services across the borough, with the intension of supporting population wellbeing.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

The Scrutiny Topic Review report identified a number of partner organisations involved in the delivery of mental health services, and emphasizes their key role in preventing and delaying the need for greater intervention.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

There is a specific focus Children and Young People' mental health needs in the report and the services on offer to meet this need.

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

The report identifies the need to be vigilant of different minority groups and cultural requirements in the delivery of mental health services.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

- None identified.
- 6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**
- Community and voluntary organisations are highlighted as playing a pivotal role in keeping people well across the borough.
- 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**
- 7.1 None identified.
- 8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**
- 8.1 The report identifies the needs to reach different groups and communities within the borough. Actions aligned to the recommendations around this are incumbent on Mersey Care and respective partners.
- 9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1 None identified.
- 10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**
- 10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.