

Council officers say progress being made with social care – but no end in sight

Social care bosses are unable to reassure patients when bosses will get to grips with a “crisis” in providing the service in the Capital.

The city council’s Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee heard from officers that health and social care remains Edinburgh’s top rated risk and that a failure to get to grips with it could “cause direct harm” to people.

The Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership has consistently failed to meet targets – put down in part to a lack of resources and an ageing population. Edinburgh is the fastest growing city in the UK. The increasing numbers of people of all ages requiring social care assistance has often been cited in recent years as one of the reasons for council overspending.

Officers were quizzed by councillors about the failure to reduce the risk to the authority and asked for a time-scale when the service will improve.

Liberal Democrat Cllr Kevin Lang said: “Despite all of the activity that we are doing, we still end up with the same risk.

“This is, rightly so, number one on the risk register and has been for as long as I’ve been on this committee. Over time, we are still not seeing that net risk reduced.

“The obvious question is, at what point in the future, with the controls that we are pursuing, would we expect that net risk, either in terms of likelihood or impact, to reduce? At what point should this committee expect to see that score come down?”

Tom Cowan, head of operations for health and social care, said progress had been made to improve service.

He said: “This is the correct reflection of the scale of the operation that we are undertaking. It would be irresponsible of us to identify quick resolves to the risk.

“We would prefer to maintain the risk levels where they are at the moment, whilst we undertake the actions that we need to take. We know the transformation programme is going to take some time.”

Mr Cowan ruled out putting a date on when health and social care will no longer be the council’s top area of risk.

He added: “I honestly wish I could give you an answer of precision that would give you a trajectory of a moment in time where you would feel reassured by the levels of risk that we are undertaking.

“At the moment, what we are trying to do is to get to grips with exactly what the strategic and operation practice has been, who’s managing what, and begin to address some of the underpinning elements of that.

“We do consider ourselves to have made significant impact in a relatively short period of time. I honestly can’t give you a date but I do expect subsequent returns to start to give you more flesh on the bone in terms of responses.”



Cllr Kevin Lang
Liberal Democrat

Speaking after the meeting, Cllr Lang raised concerns that patients cannot yet be reassured when the failures will be tackled.

He said: "It is clear that officials are working extremely hard to try to improve standards and reduce delays. However, despite all this work, nobody can yet say when the crisis in our health and social care system will end.

"Given we are talking about some of the most vulnerable and dependent people in Edinburgh, this needs to be kept as one of the council's highest priorities. It is even more important for the Scottish Government to ensure Edinburgh and other local authorities get the extra money which is so desperately needed to invest in social care."