

Vulnerable at risk as social services adopt 'life and limb' service

A 'life and limb' service is putting the health and safety of some of East Lothian's most vulnerable residents at risk after financial cuts forced social workers to reduce support to a minimum, health chiefs have been told.

Team leaders from across the county's health and social care teams joined forces to produce a report for bosses setting out the stark reality facing their staff and the impact on the people they are there to support after funds were slashed.

And they warned any further pressure on the services could reduce their ability to achieve "positive health and well-being outcomes for East Lothian residents".

Among concerns raised were a lack of monitoring of private guardians – people appointed to make decisions for adults and children unable to do so themselves – with hundreds of reviews outstanding and no way to catch up and an inequality in care home provision after council beds were cut.

There were also concerns that support being offered to people was already reduced to the minimum required and claims

people's quality of life was being impacted because of difficulty getting rehab treatment.

One manager told bosses: "It is not only about the right to live in their own home, it is about the right to rehabilitation to ensure they are living their best life."

The report to East Lothian Integration Joint Board, which oversees health and social care policy, called on members to escalate the risks the service faced to funding partners.

It set out the concerns of staff working across the health and social service who are having to cope with changes to the way they work and funding available and said in some cases it was proving almost impossible to meet the professional standards set for them.

Among changes brought in to save funds in social services was a move to maximise people's independence and ensure they have "just enough" support offered to them.

Concerns were raised over care packages being reviewed by a new resource panel instead of being set by health professionals involved and it was revealed the backlog in reviews for private guardians was no longer expected to be cleared up.

It said: "It is a statutory requirement to monitor and supervise private guardianships – currently, 172 remain outstanding for review and there is no capacity to do this work.

"There are 63 outstanding cases to be reviewed where the guardianship is managed by the local authority."

The reduction in council funded care home beds, which have fallen by 100 since 2017 were also said to be creating inequality.

The report said: "This creates disparity as there are fewer

placements available for people who do not have sufficient funds to self-fund their care.

“This results in longer waits for hospital for a local authority care home placements and people having to remain at home with care that is not sufficient to meet their needs, for longer.”

Board members promised workers voices were being heard through the report and agreed to write to the Scottish Government and escalate the concerns to funding partners East Lothian Council and NHS Lothian.

Councillor Shamin Akhtar, board convenor, praised the work of the county’s health and social care workers and promised to ensure their concerns were heard.

She said: “We all come into this to make a difference to people’s lives and that has become something which is hugely challenging every single day.”

The full report and findings can be read here www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17296/east_lothian_integration_joint_board

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter