
OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND PARTNERSHIPS PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the main areas of work under my Health and Partnerships Portfolio were as follows.

Review of Hyper-Acute Stroke Services

2. I have attended Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee meetings and the consultation events organised by the Primary Care Trust. Members are aware of the work that the Scrutiny Committee has been undertaking, and I commend its input into the review. The Director of Services for People has submitted a response to the consultation on behalf of the Council, which will incorporate Scrutiny Committee's report and the feedback we've had through the additional consultation that the Council has organised. Members may be aware that the Darlington Partnership has also submitted a response, expressing concern.

Healthy Darlington

3. The Healthy Darlington theme group met on 16 August 2011 and covered a wide agenda. The group considered the Hyper Acute Stroke Service proposals under consultation and took the opportunity to ask representatives from NHS County Durham and NHS Darlington and County Durham and Darlington NHS Acute Foundation Trust a range of questions.
4. The Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) Commissioning Manager reported on progress in developing a new Adult Substance Misuse and Alcohol Services contract. The commission process is complex; however, it is anticipated that the new service will be launched in April 2012.
5. The Public Health Portfolio Lead for Tobacco Control presented the final Darlington Tobacco Control Action Plan and highlighted the contributions Healthy Darlington group members could make. I have agreed to take on the role of chairing the Darlington Tobacco Control Alliance.

Darlington Formative Health and Wellbeing Board

6. The Formative Health and Wellbeing Board commenced in February 2011, it does not yet reflect what are expected to be the full statutory membership but progress is being made to have a Darlington Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board in place by April 2012. Darlington has joined a national "Community of Practice" as an early Adopter of the Health and Wellbeing Board arrangements.

Evaluation of Opportunities re Integrated Commissioning

7. County Durham and Darlington GP Federation has been selected as one of 52 pathfinders by the government to work together to manage their local budgets and commission services for patients direct with other NHS colleagues and the local authority. Each local clinical commissioning group will be a statutory body, and the council are currently working with stakeholders to develop an appropriate model to support and take forward clinical commissioning within the Darlington locality.
8. Given the unique position of Darlington's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) being co-terminus with the boundaries of the local authority, this provides a platform to begin discussions about potentially working towards a more integrated approach to commissioning across pathways for the Darlington population.
9. In order to support the development work that is currently underway with the CCG, it has been agreed by the formative Health and Well Being Board to initially explore the options available to Darlington when developing new models for Health and Social Care commissioning. The culmination of this will be a 'proof of concept' report which would be presented to the formative Health and Well Being Board in October 2011.

HealthWatch Update

10. A national consultation process is taking place in relation to funding allocations for funding HealthWatch arrangements. Darlington will draft a response as part of this national consultation process.
11. A HealthWatch project team has been developed which includes LINK members and CCG representatives to consider how Darlington jointly commissions new arrangements for patient and public involvement alongside CCG.

Healthy Lives, Healthy People – update and way forward (July 2011)

12. The above publication from Government sets out further proposals for developing a reformed public health system for England. The document makes it clear that the system will be built on local leadership in Local Authorities as a natural setting to lead on public health functions which will improve health and reduce inequalities.
13. The guidance confirms that a limited number of conditions will be imposed on the public health ring-fenced grant. Local Authorities will be supported by their Directors of Public Health who will have representatives across health improvement, health protection and health services.
14. Directors of Public Health and their teams will advise on health to elected members and officers and will also produce an annual report on public health.
15. Local Authorities' new leadership role will include providing public health advice through their Director of Public Health to NHS Commissioning. A "core public offer" from Local Authorities to the NHS will be developed; this will define the support available from the Local Authority.
16. A series of further updates will be developed and released from Government over the next four months.

Darlington Partnership Review

17. Since March I have been helping shape the review of Darlington Partnership, ensuring that the new structure which emerges is an effective way for the Council to engage with its partners in the public private and voluntary sectors. The background to the review is that alongside the reduction in public sector funding, the Government has removed much of the 'machinery' with which local strategic partnerships had been conducting their business. This has created a very different operating environment which Darlington Partnership has embraced as an opportunity to review its purpose and governance structures. Despite the changed environment I am pleased that the partnership has reaffirmed its commitment to our shared overarching strategy One Darlington: Perfectly Placed.
18. In these challenging times partnership working is more important than ever and I will continue to work within the partnership to ensure that future partnership arrangements are effective for the Council.
19. I am exploring how the Council may want to work differently with the communities of Darlington and as I explained to the Board in June I believe the Partnership has a significant role to play in this. Elected members will also have a crucial role to play. Your views on the review of the Partnership have been very important. I will be conducting a piece of work that specifically considers how the involvement of local councillors and community groups can be developed.

Growing Old Living in Darlington (GOLD)

20. The Health Group within GOLD held a discussion about the planned changes to hyper-acute stroke service in Darlington. There was good representation from GOLD membership and representatives of NHS County Durham and Darlington were present to answer questions from the group. GOLD followed up the meeting by writing to the PCT to further question the membership of the strategy group and how the proposals had been developed. A response has been received and will form part of the information used to support the Council's response to the hyper-acute stroke consultation.

Welfare Rights

21. The team are involved in briefing council staff about the potential impact of proposed benefit changes to ensure that the increased demand on services throughout Darlington can be understood. A key issue here is the change to housing benefit and the time-limiting of a number of other benefits including contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance. A briefing sheet is also in development to support Members when questions are raised by their constituents.
22. The total caseload for the team currently is very high with 205 cases currently open. During August 58 new enquiries were opened and 36 were closed. Three advice surgeries have been held at Middleton-St-George psychiatric hospital and these are funded by the hospital.
23. The Community Advice Partnership has run two campaigns targeting older people. The first was with Anchor Housing which generated over £12,500 for tenants who are over 75. The second was a campaign through Lifeline to concentrate on owner occupiers and this has released £80,000 of additional benefits so far.

Darlington Together

24. We have agreed the principles of Darlington Together as a model for future working for supporting democratic engagement and social inclusion. This is an essential part of the Council's response to providing leadership to protect the vulnerable at a time of declining public resources. We have also authorised the review and alignment of related plans and strategies in the light of emerging Darlington Together vision trying to ensure broad member support for the approach to enable it to be sustainable for the future. I look forward to developing a Darlington Together Implementation Plan to achieve our goal.

Councillor A. Scott
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Partnerships