
OVERVIEW OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform and update Members on progress within Adult Social Care and Housing since the last meeting of Council. The following are the main areas of work under the Portfolio for Adult Social Care and Housing.

Adult Social Care –Strategic Commissioning

2. The Care Act 2014 poses a duty on the Local Authority to provide independent advocacy for those who meet the qualifying conditions. The role of the independent advocate is to support and represent the person and to facilitate their involvement in the key processes and interactions with the local authority and other organisations as required for the assessment, support planning and review process and in relation to a safeguarding enquiry or safeguarding adult review.
3. An independent advocate will be appointed when there is no appropriate individual available to support and represent the person's wishes who is not paid or professionally engaged in providing care or treatment to the person or their carer.
4. At this stage it is difficult to gauge the demand for independent advocacy and, as a consequence, we have commissioned an initial pilot with Darlington Association on Disability, our current provider, to test demand and ensure we are compliant with the Care Act. The six month pilot will be evaluated and used to commission the future service.
5. A number of existing contracts in relation to day opportunities for older people, people with a mental health problem and older people with a mental health problem are due to end at the end of September. The service review and analysis process is underway and the development of new service specifications and procurement will take place through the summer.

Adult Social Care – Operational Developments

6. The Responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team report and recommendations have been signed off by Joint Management Team (JMT); work will now commence to progress those recommendations including the development of facilities within the community to support the service, a review of the domiciliary care contract, recruitment of more permanent staff to the RIACT team rather than using agency staff, more effective and efficient use of In-house Reablement Domiciliary staff and

making better use of assistive technology.

7. There is a project group in place to look at the development and greater use of assistive technology, the project is running as part of the managing the cost of care but will also link with health colleagues and the work that is happening in relation to telehealth so that we can support the work associated with the Better Care fund, including seven-day working, MDT work and reducing admissions to hospital and residential.
8. Performance figures to date have identified a reduction in the number of admissions to residential care, currently standing at 164 as opposed to 192 last year.
9. Work is on-going in relation to all of the Care Act work streams. We have now appointed to the role of the Care Act Implementation Lead Officer and Philip Haselhurst started his employment on 20 April 2015. Training is on-going with staff across the authority, particularly Adult Social Care Staff, and the project team has provided a Care Act overview to more than 500 members of staff and partners from the voluntary and community sector, as well as those representing the residential and domiciliary care providers. The Authority is continuing to work with the other regional authorities as the lead organisation for workforce and an e:learning training package has been purchased by monies allocated to the twelve North East Authorities. This will provide more in-depth training on all areas of the Act to anyone working within health or social care within the Borough. Specific training on eligibility and assessment is underway with assessing staff. An additional piece of on-going work relates to the first point of contact to ensure the local authority is meeting its duties in relation to the Care Act. This involves staff within the Contact Centre and Adult Social Care Staff. The remit of this piece of work has been widened to look across both adult and children's services. The consultation on the 2016 parts of the Care Act is underway and responses were due by 30 March 2015, the same day as Parliament dissolved. The consultation time has been significantly shortened. The national consultation exercise for this region took place at the end of February.
10. A domiciliary care provider working in Darlington gave notice that they would cease trading from 22 April 2015. Staff worked with the provider to gather relevant information and the communications team are aware. Staff continue to liaise with colleagues and other providers to ensure that service users are provided with the necessary care required. Reviews will be undertaken by social care staff to work with individuals around the change.

Housing Services

11. Together with Durham, Northumberland and Redcar and Cleveland Councils, a successful bid has been made to a new Domestic Abuse Fund. This has resulted in this Council receiving £78,500. Whilst there is an effective network of refuge provision throughout the north east, gaps remain in meeting the needs of all clients, such as bed spaces for males and some women fleeing violence can be difficult to place, for example those with older children or households with special needs. This

funding will be particularly helpful in Darlington in meeting an identified need for two additional units of safe house accommodation.

12. A recent peer review of homelessness services funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has recently been completed. The feedback was that we were providing excellent services and given an overall score of 77 per cent, with anything over 60 per cent considered to be good. In particular, homeless prevention was highlighted as very successful and on an upward trend. Our prevention statistics are almost double the regional average and three times higher than the national average. Partnership working was also highlighted as being positive and pro-active. Our facilities were described as modern, well designed and bright with access to a range of customer portals including telephone, computer and touch screen. Housing Options Advisors were described as providing thorough and professional discussions that enabled customers to get their points across. We are currently developing a new Homelessness Strategy and areas identified for further improvement will be included in the action plan.
13. We have successfully completed the annual programme to modernise over 500 Council homes with new kitchens, bathrooms, upgraded electrics and the replacement of inefficient back boilers with A rated combination boilers. These works ensure that the housing stock continues to be maintained in line with the decent homes standard and local Darlington Standard.
14. The specification for the housing modernisation programme has been reviewed and resulted in identifying the need for improved ventilation to combat issues of condensation as a result of poor ventilation. In response, the specification has been revised and all properties to be modernised in future financial years will receive a Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) system in lieu of current extractor fans. The PIV system will improve air quality and prevent the build-up of condensation by drawing clear air from outside the property and diffusing it through the property forcing moist and stale air out of the building.
15. The roof replacement programme continues in Hundens Lane, with 80 properties receiving new sarking felt, roof tiles, rainwater goods and insulation as required. Work also includes the replacement of flat roofs with new decking, felt, rainwater goods and new insulation.

GOLD

16. Council Officers continued to work with GOLD Members and Darlington Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to submit funding bids, with a view to securing the continuation of GOLD beyond 31 March 2015 when Council funding ended.
17. I am pleased to report that one of these bids was successful and, with effect from 1 April 2015, GOLD transferred to CAB.
18. The annual Celebration Event and Annual General Meeting for GOLD took place on 19 March 2015. The event was well attended and was a fitting acknowledgment of the achievements of GOLD during its time with the Authority. There are plans to develop the services offered by GOLD under the leadership of CAB and I wish

them well for the future.

19. In addition to my regular briefings with Officers, have also :-

- (a) chaired the meeting of Darlington Ageing Well Together Network; and
- (b) attended a meeting of the Adult Safeguarding Board.

Councillor Veronica Copeland
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adult Social Care and Housing