
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 Market Position Statement for 2014 – 2015 has now been published and is available on-line. The Statement is aimed at service providers and sets out key information about the population of Darlington, identifies existing support services, highlights gaps in the current market and looks to set a future strategic direction. The Statement has been developed in partnership with people who use social care support and local providers. A key aim of this and future Market Position Statements is to ensure that the Council uses its limited resources to meet assessed social care needs in ways which work best for people. Future Statements will include information on children and young people and health services to ensure a joined up approach within Darlington.
3. The Council currently has a contract with Darlington Association on Disability to provide a range of advocacy services. As a consequence of the Cheshire West ruling there has been considerable pressure on the Responsible Persons Representative (RPR) element of the contract. An RPR is appointed if a Deprivation of Liberty is authorised and there is no other person who can act for that person. The increasing numbers are being monitored; however, there is a clear pressure. In 2013/14, there were 20 referrals for an RPR, between April and May 2014 there were 17.

Adult Social Care – Operational Developments

4. Care Act Update – Care and Support Statutory Guidance was issued by the Department of Health later than planned in October, work is now underway to fully understand the implications of the guidance and any changes that were made to it following the consultation period. Darlington is linking with regional colleagues in relation to making the necessary changes that are required and we have been identified as the lead authority for workforce planning and development. The Act significantly reforms the way social care needs are assessed, met and paid for, and how social care services are provided. In the Act, assessment is divided into distinct stages. Critically, all those people aged over 65 (regardless of their financial situation) will be eligible for an assessment to identify their needs (as now)

but if their needs meet the new national eligibility criteria, then those eligible social care needs will need to be assessed by the Local Authority and reviewed annually (this may mean that the authority need to employ more social workers to meet this demand and/or find more innovative ways of assessing need). Given the scale of the task involved in terms of new processes and system as well as ensuring the workforce is ready for the change, a new post of Care Act Implementation Officer is currently being recruited to support with this work. It is expected that they will work closely with the Principal Social Worker, Officers within the Local Authority and regional colleagues to ensure we are ready to respond to the changes. At this stage we are not clear what the financial implications for the Council will be.

5. Darlington Care Home Closure – Representatives from the Local Authority have worked closely with individuals affected and their families as well as colleagues from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and staff from the home to ensure minimal disruption to the individuals during the transition period. A number of the individuals are moving to a home within the Darlington area, the Manager from the closing home has been appointed by the home where the majority of individuals are moving to and there has been the opportunity for some of the staff to apply for vacancies within the home. This will provide the individuals with some consistency in terms of staffing and support.
6. Making Safeguarding Personal – Darlington has signed up to Making Safeguarding Personal and we have set ourselves the target of achieving the Gold Standard. In relation to Adult Safeguarding, the Care Act heralds a new way of working which is underpinned by the principles of Making Safeguarding Personal. The statutory guidance requires local authorities to make safeguarding a personalised experience: aiming to achieve the outcomes identified by adults at risk of harm and abuse, rather than people being taken through a process. A task and finish style approach will be used to start this work through the monthly Safeguarding Adults Manager's meetings where they will be using the findings from a recent study completed by the Quality and Review Function to inform some of the changes. A key element to ensuring the work is successful for us to involve individuals at the beginning in terms of reviewing our current systems and processes, this is something which the task and finish groups will focus on.
7. Better Care Fund and Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT's) - Four Social Work staff have now been identified to work as part of the GP Practice MDT's. The staff have been aligned to the GP surgeries as well as the Care Homes which their allocated surgery covers. Community Matrons have also been aligned to the GP Surgeries and Care Homes. Staff from Adult Social Care have started to attend the MDT Practice meetings and feedback has been positive in terms of the opportunity for information sharing and joined up working. Further work is ongoing to look at how staff from Adult Social Care need to respond to the requirements of seven day working and working 8.00 a.m.-8.00 p.m. and the requirements of the Rapid Response/Escalation MDT. This work links with the ongoing review of Response Integrated Assessment Care Team (RIACT) services and how they may need to develop to complement and support the work of the MDT's.
8. Validation Process Update - Work has been ongoing looking at how we can implement changes and improve the validation/authorisation process of support

packages within adult social care and across our key partners (health) in terms of ensuring appropriate and accurate funding streams for individuals with both health and social care needs. Plans are now in place to have one joint validation forum with health and social care representatives where agreement in relation to continuing health care and S117 funding will be discussed and agreed. This should improve the opportunity for the right funding stream to be in place and improve overall outcomes for individuals as there should be fewer delays in funding being agreed. The new process will also see Adult Social Care staff being given authorisation limits. A monitoring and audit process will be in place but the principle behind the changes is to ensure the assessing officer takes ownership of their work and decision making and to encourage creativity and better use of community resources when support planning, which often achieves much better outcomes for the individual often at a reduced cost. Our experience from the development of the Life Stages/Mental Health Validation Forum has shown that the forum can often be a place of learning and sharing knowledge with support staff in sharing good practice and their knowledge of local resources. Training has been given to all staff and guidance has been developed to support staff during this process. An evaluation of the changes will take place and amendments will be made if needed.

9. Adult Social Care staffing – Both Operations Managers posts have been recruited to support the Assistant Director and Heads of Service. This should ensure there is sufficient capacity to be able to drive the service forward in terms of being able to respond to the changes and opportunities that lie ahead, in relation to a number of areas which include integrated working and the implementation of the Care Act.

Housing Services

10. Earlier in the year we reviewed the way in which we manage our housing stock and moved from having generic Housing Officers to more specific roles. This included the creation of an Income Management Team whose sole focus is to work with tenants who are in arrears. They offer general advice and support on Housing Benefit, Money Management and Welfare Benefits as well as sign-posting to more specialist services as necessary. Since the introduction of the Bedroom Tax, there has also been an emphasis on encouraging people to downsize or, where appropriate, apply for discretionary housing payments. This has resulted in some significant improvements in rent arrears performance, despite the challenges faced by the Welfare Reforms and the economic climate. The rent arrears at the end of September 2014 were £464,377 which represents a reduction from the previous year of £50,000 and 600 less arrears cases. The arrears as a percentage of the debit is 1.86 per cent, the lowest figure in some years and in the top quartile of best performing housing organisations.
11. The Community Centres in the Council's sheltered housing schemes are a valuable local asset, used by a variety of organisations for the benefit of the community. A new Dementia café has recently been opened at Katherine Street Community Centre in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society. The facilities are provided free of charge to reflect the valuable contribution of the services being provided. The

café is open on the second Wednesday of each month to people with dementia, their carers and friends.

12. Plans for the regeneration of Redhall Estate are progressing well. On 20 November 2014, residents of Redhall attended an open event at the local Community Centre to be updated on the latest plans for the regeneration work and find out more about the demolition programme planned to commence in December 2014. There was particular interest in the programme for new energy efficient composite doors and double glazed windows, as well as the external wall cladding in a range of muted colours. This work will not only greatly improve the visual appearance of the properties, but will also ensure that the homes have significantly improved thermal efficiency, and address issues of fuel poverty.
13. Housing Officers have been working with the police and local residents at Park Place on a litter picking initiative. Many of the older residents reported feeling vulnerable due to nearby shrubberies which were creating areas of poor visibility. Working with the Police, voluntary and statutory agencies these were removed.

GOLD

14. Council Staff have continued to work on the future of GOLD once Council funding ceases by April 2015. A report and Equality Impact Assessment to Cabinet on 4 November 2014, sought approval to continue to work with the identified organisation to seek alternative funding and to transfer the half time post to them by April 2015.
15. Two further Dignity and Respect training courses have been arranged, one with residential care staff and the other with a group of Health and Social Care students and apprentices from the Coleridge Centre. Another volunteer has been recruited to deliver the training.
16. The Health Group continues to meet monthly. Information from the Clinical Commissioning Group regarding cataract treatment, toenail cutting service and the move of the Muscular Skeletal Service to the Darlington Arena is still awaited. The last speaker was from the Hospital's Acute Stroke Service.
17. The Christmas Party is arranged and the last newsletter was sent out in October.
18. Members continue to represent GOLD on various boards and meetings and have attended for example the Health and Partnership Scrutiny Committee and the Darlington Ageing Well Network (DAWN).
19. I have also :-
 - (a) attended the First Stop Annual General Meeting;
 - (b) attended the Festival of Thrift;
 - (c) chaired the meeting of DAWN;
 - (d) attended the meeting of the Foundation Trust Governing Council;
 - (e) presented certificates at Moorlands Care Home;
 - (f) attended a breakfast briefing with the Alzheimer's Society;

- (g) attended a number of Commemoration events in my capacity as Veterans Champion;
- (h) visited St Teresa's Hospice; and
- (i) attended Darlington Association on Disability's Annual General Meeting.

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