
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. There continues to be some pressure on the current advocacy contract to deliver paid Relevant Person Representation (RPR). This service, given to those who are deprived of their liberty and who have no one to act on their behalf, has seen a significant increase in demand following the recent Cheshire West Judgement. Work is underway with the current provider to ensure that people receive the support they require.
3. Following a recent Cabinet report to free up Mental Health Capital to support local providers meet the outcomes of the national mental health strategy. The six successful providers are required to spend the capital within the next six months and show how it will support the outcomes of people with a mental health problem.
4. I am pleased to report that during the month of November, two families, each of whom have a disabled child were able to move into their new homes as part of the redevelopment of the Cockerton area of Darlington. As a result of close partnership working between the Developer, the Registered Social Landlord, the Occupational Therapy Team and the families, the properties, which were part of a larger redevelopment in the Cockerton area, were designed to meet the specific needs of each of the children. Funded by a Disabled Facilities Grant, the purpose built properties will enable the families and their child to live as independently as possible.

Adult Social Care – Operational Developments

5. Work is ongoing in relation to all of the Care Act work streams, recruitment is continuing as we were unsuccessful first time for the Care Act lead officer role. Regional funding has been secured to help with the workforce work stream and to enable specific training to be commissioned. National communications messages have been distributed and work is underway to develop a localised communications plan for Darlington. The Consultation for the 2016 part of the Act began in January 2015. The Department of Health intends to release a further funding model in the early part of next year.

6. A Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Manager has been appointed and took up her post on 12 January 2015. A development day will be arranged for all parties within the Hub.
7. Better Care Fund/Multi-Disciplinary Teams (BCF/MDT) - a development session held recently, recommendations/findings from this were presented to Joint Management Team for consideration. Escalation MDT will commence from 5 January, this will take place weekly at Hundens Lane. Ann Workman is to chair initially and it will involve social workers, therapists, voluntary sectors, community matrons, health and social care RIACT managers. Further work is ongoing in relation to working with health colleagues on the Hospital to Home Project. Recent feedback from the MDT's, held in the GP practices, has been very positive.
8. The Validation Process has been in place from 1 December 2014 and is working well, with opportunity for case discussion with health colleagues in a timely manner to agree funding arrangements. The Forum is also working well in terms of case discussion and sharing good practice amongst the social work practitioners.
9. In relation to Mental Health co-location, most of the work has now been completed. This includes an up-to-date Information Sharing Agreement, Head of Terms for the use of facilities at West Park, the relocation of the social work team to a dedicated space, the upgrade of the network, installation of new computers and other related hardware, and the recruitment of additional staff to facilitate the move from integrated working. Managers from the Council and Tees, Esk and Wear Valley (TEWV) continue to work closely and have started the process of transferring cases where either social work or health input is required. Many cases will remain jointly worked. The Operations Manager took up his post from 1 December and will be actively involved in the completion of this piece of work and developing the next phase of co-location with TEWV Colleagues.
10. A detailed piece of work which was funded by the LGA in relation to the Supported Accommodation project has recently been completed by Consultants, Alder Advice. In Darlington, the project specifically focussed on :-
 - (a) testing the cost effectiveness and value for money of the existing pattern of resource allocation, including models of support;
 - (b) understanding how assistive technology can contribute to an individual's independence and reduce overall costs, and
 - (c) developing a plan, created in partnership with service users and carers, that sets out future intentions.
11. The draft overview report was completed on 18 December which includes a clear set of recommendations and suggested work plan. The report also highlighted and praised the quality of social work practice within the Life Stages Team and it also stated that the Life Stage model was innovative and forward thinking. Alder have asked permission to show case the model to other local authorities who they are working with and an enquiry from Cumbria has already been made. The Alder team are returned to Darlington on 6 January to complete their final presentation.

Housing Services

12. Good progress is being made with the new Housing Plus service. Ninety tenants are already receiving support (the scheme will have a capacity of 1000) from a small dedicated team of officers who are helping tenants understand the requirements of their tenancy agreement in respect of rent payments, house and garden conditions, how to maximise claims for benefits and access other support agencies that can provide additional support. Each tenant is being guided and supported to use the self-service terminals or e-mail to report repairs, check rent balances and find out more about Council services. It is hoped that by doing this we will build long-term capability and reduce the need for tenants to contact the Council in person.
13. The scheme literature was developed with users and agreed by the Tenant Board Reader Panel. For the first time QR codes have been used so that tenants can access the service via their smart phones.
14. Over recent months, officers in Housing and Building Services have been working together to make the repair service more streamlined. Better procurement processes, improved repair diagnosis, a review of the van stock and the introduction of en-route text messages have all played a part. This has led to an increase in the number of repair requests that have been completed on the first visit. There has also been a steady and significant reduction in tenants contacting Customer Services to chase existing repairs. The monthly average for the early part of the year was around 450 calls per month, compared to the period August to November when it was 290.
15. As part of our aim to increase the awareness of the availability of social housing in Darlington, the housing web pages have been upgraded to make them easier to use. Negotiations are well advanced with IT partners and shortly it will be possible to view the adverts on the TV screens in both the Customer Services and the Health Hub. Information and advice sessions are being coordinated with the Economy Manager so that we can promote the housing offer to businesses in town and show how the services we have to offer can help them with recruitment and retention issues.
16. Housing Officers are working with the Tenant Reader Panel to review the letters issued during the rent arrears recovery processes and are also rebranding the existing money advice service to encourage tenants and applicants to seek advice and guidance to deal with benefit, budgeting and money management issues. The Money Advice Service also helps tenants to access savings schemes and affordable credit, liaising closely with the Darlington Credit Union. On average this service presently deals with an average 89 referrals per month, relying mainly on the use negotiation and advice as the tools to deal with the majority of cases. Additional training and information is also being provided to Housing Officers so that they can deal with fuel poverty issues.
17. As part of our commitment to support independent living in appropriate accommodation, Housing and Building Services install a number of aids and adaptations as recommended by the Occupational Therapy Service. These are

generally routine items such as hand rails and alterations to provide level access entry and bathing assistance such as flat floor showers. Recent, more specialist adaptations have included a redesign of the cooking facilities in the communal area at Ted Fletcher Court so that volunteers can use the cooking facilities more easily and safely. Each week the volunteers work with the Scheme Manager to provide a Lunch Club. We have refurbished and extended an existing ground floor space for a family at Branksome with a disabled teenage child to provide a living, sleeping and bathing area that allows for movement in a wheelchair, with access to the garden and purpose designed off street car-parking. This has ensured that the family are able to benefit from a normal family life. For an adult at Middleton St George we have designed and built a 40 square metre extension to a family house to provide wheelchair accessible living, bathing and sleeping accommodation as well as a galley kitchen.

GOLD

18. Council staff have continued to work on the future of GOLD once Council funding ceases by April 2015. On 4 November 2014 Cabinet approved the decision for GOLD to work with the Darlington Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), to seek alternative funding and to transfer the half time post to them by April 2015. An update to advise of this has been sent to the GOLD membership and to many staff and organisations. The worker has since spent some time receiving induction at CAB and working on funding bids, and has taken a two day Level 3 training course in teaching Financial Capability, which is envisaged to be part of the role and was recommended as being helpful towards securing funding. A funding bid to County Durham Community Foundation will be submitted very soon. A bid is being made to Comic Relief. Further bids are being considered. Pearl Berry of Economic Regeneration is also giving support. Hazel Thompson of CAB has met with the GOLD Focus Group (management committee) and they discussed the funding bids and briefly discussed how GOLD would work under CAB. It is hoped that January's Focus Group meeting will be held in the CAB offices.
19. Two further Dignity and Respect training courses have been completed, one with residential care staff and the other with a group of Health and Social Care students and apprentices from the Coleridge Centre. The coursework will soon be marked and submitted for internal verification. Eighteen learners have taken part.
20. The Health Group continues to meet monthly. Information has been sought from the Clinical Commissioning Group regarding cataract treatment, the toenail cutting service and the move of the Muscular Skeletal Service to Darlington Arena. There is a workshop in December on Muscular Skeletal Services where the group's views will be represented. The last speaker was Kate McLatchie of Darlington Borough Council on Safeguarding. The group members were extremely pleased that she had answered their questions fully and were grateful for the information she gave. Elder Abuse is of concern to the group and they want to assist wherever possible to reduce and eliminate it.
21. The Christmas Party was held for over 120 people in Hopetown and Whessoe Club. The Mayor opened the event and I gave the closing words. Events for next

year are being planned.

22. Members continue to represent GOLD on various boards and meetings and have attended for example the Care Home Forum and the Darlington Organisations Together (DOT) meetings.

23. I have also :-

- (a) attended a meeting of the Acute Trust Council of Governors;
- (b) attended a training event for members of the Health and Well Being Board; and
- (c) Chaired a meeting of Darlington Ageing Well Together Network.

**Councillor Veronica Copeland,
Adult Social Care and Housing Portfolio**