
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:

Public Health

2. Since my last report, collaborative work on Stoptober has been conducted with County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust. I took part in a photo call with Fresh and articles were published in Darlington Together and the Northern Echo. CDDFT held an event in the Town Centre which was well attended. Through the Director of Public Health the Authority along with County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust had contributed towards a national evaluation of the impact of Stoptober which was being undertaken by the Public Health England.
3. Public Health Service Reviews are underway as part of the conditions of the waiver to procurement and contract rules granted by Council earlier this year. This enabled the safe transition of Public Health contracts to this Council from the former County Durham and Darlington Primary Care Trust. The Public Health Team are working with Officers from the contracting, procurement and legal sections to ensure that services are rigorously reviewed and that these services are developed to meet the needs of local people while providing excellent value for money. Equality Impact Assessments are currently being undertaken for a range of existing Public Health commissioned services which will enable the service reviews to commence. A new framework for procuring primary care services will also be agreed prior to March 2014.
4. The Warm Up North British Gas Project was launched in September. This is the largest and most advanced example in the Country of a regional response to the Government's Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) initiatives. The Council is working in partnership to deliver the benefits of this scheme in Darlington through our Housing Team. Public Health is supporting this initiative through a contract with Age UK aimed at reducing the burden of fuel poverty, particularly amongst vulnerable older people. As well as working with Officers to promote the Warm Up North Programme particularly with local GPs and other health professionals.
5. As part of Alcohol Awareness Week (18 to 24 November) the North East Alcohol Office (BALANCE) asked people to sign up for the 'Dry January' event in January 2014, and will support anyone who does. This is a national campaign sponsored by the charity Alcohol Concern which aims to start a national conversation and debate around alcohol and its impacts by challenging individuals to be alcohol free for a

period of 31 days in January. The local Drug and Alcohol Team (DAAT) are working with partners around a local challenge for local people to have a night-out or night-in without alcohol. This campaign will be supported by the Communications Team using social media as well as by highlighting stories and healthy tips around alcohol and 'Dry January' throughout the campaign.

6. This Council has implanted a programme to provide front line staff the opportunity to receive a free seasonal flu vaccination by the Occupational Health service this year. This is part of the Authority's contribution to reducing the impact of winter and seasonal 'flu on our local services and communities. Public Health Officers have been working with Human Resources to develop the programme and to ensure that it is targeted to the most appropriate staff. The more staff who are vaccinated against flu, the less pressure there will be on Council and Health Services during busy winter months due to a reduced spread of the virus. All frontline staff are being encouraged to make it a priority to get vaccinated to protect themselves and avoid spreading the virus unnecessarily and protect themselves, their families and service users.

Darlington Partnership

7. Darlington Partnership decided that 'Developing a Good Neighbour Scheme' will be its single Action Priority for 2013 /14. The Partnership had already been deliberating how it could support elderly and vulnerable people in the community and therefore agreed that it would like to see an early focus on these groups.
8. The Partnership has fostered discussions between Durham Constabulary and Age UK Darlington in exploring how Neighbourhood Watch might play a part in a good neighbour scheme.
9. Good Friends is a pioneering scheme which aims in its first year to recruit 1,000 volunteers to help 1,500 older and vulnerable people with simple day-to-day tasks in a bid to increase independence, combat isolation and improve quality of life. It is funded by:
 - (a) Darlington Borough Council,
 - (b) Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust,
 - (c) Tees Esk and Wear Valley Foundation Trust,
 - (d) Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group
 - (e) Durham Constabulary

and managed and part funded by Age UK Darlington.

10. The ambition for the Council and the other funders is that Good Friends will help avoid cost and reduce demand on stretched services. To assess its impact an evaluation of the scheme is running throughout.
11. The initiative was formally launched on 1 October by the Lord Lieutenant, Sue Snowden.

Welfare Rights

12. A key part of the Welfare Rights Service has been continuing to support the introduction of and impacts of Welfare Reform. This has included:
 - (a) Visiting Lifestages Team to give an update on developments in social security law and assist with individual enquiries
 - (b) Supporting the introduction of the Social Fund
 - (c) Supporting the Welfare Reform group
 - (d) Supporting Darlington Partnership
 - (e) Attending the staff meeting of a major local social care provider to offer an update on the Welfare Reforms
 - (f) Attending the Sexual Violence Partnership meeting to provide an update on the Welfare Reforms
 - (g) Providing support to the Early Years' Service and providing information about the eligibility criteria for free schools
13. 14 new enquiries were opened during August and 16 enquiries were closed. These include both complex and one-off enquiries. In addition, four enquiries were dealt with as anonymous enquiries or consultancy for local authority and voluntary agency staff.
14. New rules relating to appeals were introduced in October which will see mandatory reconsiderations being introduced before being able to appeal a DWP decision. This will particularly affect ESA claimants who are found fit for work and will no longer be entitled to benefit unless they sign on as available for work or are allowed to appeal. Potentially, people who are sick or disabled will have no income if they are found fit for work under ESA rules but not fit enough under Jobseeker's Allowance rules.
15. During August £7,868 (£123,513) was secured, in additional benefit, for clients. The total raised to date is £185,813.

Healthwatch

16. Healthwatch is developing well and has been very busy over the past few weeks developing its workplan which will take them up until April 2014. This workplan will help to inform work with a range of stakeholders including the Care Quality Commission, Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group, the Quality Surveillance Group and Overview and Scrutiny.
17. The workplan will cover a wide range of issues including GP Access, the 111 service and Mental Health services. The approach is very much based on collecting comments and information from the residents of Darlington and using this to improve the quality of services. Healthwatch will work with providers from all sectors to pick up where there are issues that need to be addressed. Joint working with a range of partners is key to improving support and reducing duplication particularly at a time when resources are under pressure.

18. Recruitment of volunteers is also a continuing priority as Healthwatch needs a wide range of volunteers including:
- (a) Enter and view volunteers to observe health and social care services, volunteers to work on task and finish groups to pick up any issues raised; and
 - (b) Volunteers to undertake research and report writing to influence service changes.
19. Healthwatch is also stressing the need for individuals and organisations to ensure soft intelligence is shared and logged with Healthwatch, no matter how insignificant it may seem, in order to spot trends quickly and act on them appropriately. Its generic online and hard copy survey has received a good response so far especially through social media channels.

Councillor A Scott
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Partnerships