
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. On 20 and 21 May 2015, a two day workshop was held between colleagues from Darlington Borough Council, Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group and the North of England Commissioning Support Unit. Over the two days colleagues defined the vision for integrated commissioning identified some of the challenges and design principles that would need to be in place for a successful integrated commissioning function. The group also defined which commissioning activities could be in scope and started to build a high-level model for integrated commissioning in Darlington.
3. Carers Week took place from 8th to 14th June. A number of events took place, including an Adult and Young Carers information event arranged jointly with Healthwatch. This included a presentation on the Care Act and its implications for carers and a number of information stands identifying services that are available to support carers. There was also an awareness raising event at West Park Hospital and an information stand in the Civic Reception for employees of Darlington Borough Council and the Department for Education. A number of activities also took place for carers.
4. Working with the Alzheimer's Society, a Dementia Action Alliance has been set up in Darlington. The Alliance is made up of a wide range of organisations across the Borough, with the aim of improving the lives of people with dementia and their carers. The Alliance will be concentrating on creating dementia friendly communities and raising awareness, with a view to increasing early diagnosis of dementia, reducing stigma and enabling people with dementia to contribute as fully as possible to community life.

Adult Social Care – Operational Developments

5. Work is on-going in relation to the implementation of Making Safeguarding Personal. This has been agreed by the Safeguarding Adults Board as a key priority for the year ahead. The current policies and processes are being reviewed utilising the multi-agency sub-groups as a forum for this work. The new policies will reflect

the key elements of Making Safeguarding Personal as well as being underpinned by the six key principles in accordance with the Care Act 2014. The current performance management framework linked to safeguarding is also being reviewed in line with changes to legislation, national requirements for performance recording and person-centred practice. Safeguarding Adults Managers are currently accessing additional training to support with improving their own knowledge and practice in relation to Making Safeguarding Personal.

6. Performance data for the year has now been submitted. There has been a significant increase in the number of individuals and carers who are in receipt of self-directed support which has always been an area where the authority has been lower than neighbouring authorities. In addition to this, there has been a significant reduction in the number of admissions to permanent residential care.
7. Work continues in relation to all of the Care Act Work streams. The e-learning training has now been made available to staff and will be accessible to providers and other organisations. Further assessment and eligibility training has been arranged for key staff. A series of Practitioner Forums have been facilitated by the Principal Social Worker and Care Act Implementation Officer with Assessment Staff. The feedback from these has been very positive to date for sharing good practice, discussing any difficulties or queries related to the new legislation and highlighting any areas or themes for further training and development.
8. Work is continuing in relation to the case management system for Adult Social Care. The project team and key members of staff are taking forward the work in relation to data cleansing and migration, workforce development, system redesign and mobilisation of the workforce. It is envisaged that the new system should provide efficiencies in current working practices, improve quality of practice and ensure our systems are compliant with the regulations and requirements of the Care Act, particularly in relation to the 2016 changes and the administration of care accounts.

Housing Services

9. The official opening of Regent House took place on 4 June 2015. The building has been transformed from a disused office block into 47 one-bedroomed apartments, providing much needed modern, high quality affordable homes in the town centre. Funded by Coast and Country and the Homes and Communities Agency, as part of the Government's Empty Homes scheme, the project has successfully addressed the issue of long-term empty properties whilst providing training, volunteering and work opportunities. Apprentices and trainees who participated in the project benefitted from training and development, helping them gain skills to help them access meaningful employment.
10. As part of Coast and Country's wider Digital Inclusion programme, and its commitment to supporting residents to get online, it is launching its first Wi-Fi pilot at Regent House. Residents of Regent House will have affordable Wi-Fi access from the comfort of their own home, with the added advantage that the first six months are free-of-charge. The apartments are also fitted with a low-cost, environmentally friendly communal heating system.

11. The official opening of Chillingham Court at Cockerton took place on 18 June, marking the completion of a £6 million Housing Regeneration project that has been undertaken in partnership with North Star Housing Group and Esh Property Services. Local labour has been used where possible and a huge amount of community investment work has been undertaken by partners during the regeneration programme.
12. This was a large scale project that involved the demolition of 76 homes to clear land for 84 new family homes, bungalows and apartments, providing much needed, high quality housing for the area. 24 of these homes are for sale and the other 60 are owned and managed by Endeavour Housing Association, part of the North Star Housing Group. Properties remaining in Council ownership on the estate have all been extensively refurbished to compliment the new building work.
13. Preparations are now being made for the roll out of Universal Credit (UC) which will commence in Darlington on 23 November 2015. UC will bring together six existing benefits for working aged people, including Housing Benefit, into one payment and will be administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). UC will only initially be available to single people who would otherwise have made a new claim for Jobseeker's Allowance. Therefore the numbers claiming in 2015-2016 are expected to be quite small, possibly only a few hundred. UC will then be rolled out to couples and families from 2016 onwards, including people currently receiving Housing Benefit, who will gradually migrate over to UC. It will be claimed on-line and will, for most people, be paid direct to the customer in one single payment.
14. The Council has already established a working group, including DWP representatives, to prepare for the implementation of UC in Darlington. Plans include :-
 - (a) developing communication and training plans to raise awareness of the changes with staff, elected Members, partners, the voluntary sector and the public;
 - (b) establishing personal budgeting advice for UC customers;
 - (c) linking with the existing on-line inclusion project;
 - (d) undertaking reviews of existing policies to consider the potential impacts of UC; and
 - (e) learning from other Local Authorities who have already started the roll-out of UC.
15. A key action will be to identify existing tenants who will qualify for UC, ensuring they receive the appropriate information, advice and support to enable them to pay their rent from their UC payments. For some particularly vulnerable tenants it may be necessary to request that the DWP pay the housing costs element of their UC direct to the landlord.

16. Following a review of the Tenants Board, a new structure of customer engagement has been developed with former members of the Board. Changes have been made to the way we engage with housing customers reflecting changes in lifestyles and the increasing use of social media as a means of communication. The Tenants Board continued to function until 17 June 2015 while the new structures were being put into place. So far, 66 people have come forward to volunteer to participate in the new structures. The new Customer and Scrutiny Panels will begin work in September and a new virtual forum, Housing Connect, should be available shortly.
17. A Community Fund has also been set up to allow groups of residents or leaseholders, voluntary or community groups to bid for funds. If they have a good idea that will make a difference to the lives of our Council tenants and the wider community on Council housing estates they can bid for up to £1000. In the first month nine applications have been received.
18. The social housing sector contains high proportions of vulnerable and low-income residents who are increasingly looking to their landlords to support them in heating their homes as efficiently and effectively as possible. Using Housing Revenue Account funding, Tadea, an organisation that specialises in giving energy efficiency advice and support has been appointed to visit Council tenants in their own homes. Visiting people in their own home is a particularly effective means of targeting bespoke advice and support. Advisors are able to discuss how changes to lifestyle can result in savings. They will make changes to tariffs or suppliers and deal with fuel bill arrears during the visit. They will also look at ways to maximise income through various benefits, grants and other supporting funds.
19. Building has now begun on a new Council housing development at Red Hall, starting with eight two bedroomed flats at Deepdale Way, followed by twelve two bedroomed flats at Badminton Close. They form part of a planned programme of around 170 new houses and flats over the next three years. The Homes and Communities Agency has recently confirmed an additional £2 million in funding in addition to the £1.6m already approved in the first bidding round.
20. Work is now well underway on the regeneration of the Red Hall estate. As well as work to the fabric of the estate, action has also begun to support the local community to become more involved in the future of the estate. In the first phase of work, a Neighbourhood Renewal strategy is being developed which includes an assessment of current community assets and sets the future direction of development. Groundwork Trust has been appointed to take on a co-ordinating role within the community and the various stakeholders to help move on to the next phase of development. The key aim of the work is to build a more resilient community within an overall aim of making Red Hall an attractive, vibrant place to live.
21. I have also :-
 - (a) attended Darlington's Health and Care Summit on 11th June, 2015;
 - (b) attended the opening of the Reminiscent Room at Rosemary Court;
 - (c) attended the Adult Safeguarding training day;
 - (d) attended the County Durham Foundation Trust Council of Governors;

- (e) attended a Civic Reception for the God Friends Scheme;
- (f) attended the Ageing Well Task and Finish Group;
- (g) attended the Health Summit;
- (h) attended the Best of Darling Awards;
- (i) attended the official opening of Chillingham Court in Cockerton; and
- (j) accompanies a group of residents with dementia on a trip to Durham, including a visit to the Cathedral.

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