
OVERVIEW OF ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Darlington Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board

2. The Interim Chair of the Darlington Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (DSAPB) attended our meeting to give an overview of the work and role of the Board since it became a statutory body in accordance with the requirements of the Care Act 2014.
3. We were reminded of the overarching purpose of the Board to help and safeguard adults with care and support needs and the need for it to ensure that all partners worked together to achieve this and ensure that the outcome of any actions taken made a difference.
4. Alongside its work, the Board has also commissioned one lessons learnt review (LLR) and one statutory Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR). The reviews are to explore how agencies worked together and to learn lessons from multi-agency practice. A summary of the two cases was shared, the LLR was a self-neglect case and the SAR was a lady who sadly died of natural causes in hospital on 31 January, 2016. As a result of the two reviews, all agencies have endorsed the recommendations and identified clear actions and a suite of materials are being developed to communicate the learning from the reviews across the safeguarding workforce to improve safeguarding practice in Darlington. The Board will monitor the progress of the action plans.
5. The current budget for the Adults Safeguarding Board is sufficient to maintain its costs in 2017/18 and the Interim Chair advised that discussions were taking place with partners to agree funding contributions from 2018/19 onwards.
6. The Board works closely with the Darlington Safeguarding Children Board and a joint safeguarding development session has been held which challenged how both Boards could work together effectively and efficiently to maximise the limited resources available. As a Scrutiny Committee we will also be looking at how we can work with the DSAPB to support elements of each other's work.
7. We heard that one of the main challenges for the Board was to ensure that the voice of service users and relatives were heard and we discussed how our Scrutiny Committee could assist with this as part of its work.
8. Going forward, we will work with the Business Manager of the Safeguarding Boards to ensure that the work of our Scrutiny Committee and the DSAPB is aligned

(where appropriate) and recommend approaches to ensure each group is critically supporting each other appropriately.

Introducing Flexible Tenancies for Single People under 35

9. We have been advised of the proposal to introduce two years flexible tenancies for single people under the age of 35 as a result of changes being introduced as part of the Government's welfare reforms. The changes will particularly affect single people under 35 as they will have their benefit capped at the Local Housing Allowance shared room rate, which, in Darlington, is currently £59.20 per week, approximately £16-£17 per week below current rents for one-bedroomed properties.
10. The introduction of this cap represents a clear risk to a tenant's ability to maintain a tenancy and afford the rent and some housing providers are taking action to mitigate against this. Some providers will not allocate properties to single people who are not working, whilst others are offering two-year flexible tenancies to enable the tenancy to be monitored.
11. The Housing and Planning Act 2016, requires Council's to let all new tenancies as flexible tenancies with limited exceptions and this is expected to be implemented in the Autumn 2017, however, in advance of this, the Council is proposing that two-year flexible tenancies be introduced for single tenants under the age of 35 at 1 June, 2017 and this can be done under the Localism Act 2011. This will enable the Council to undertake more frequent reviews of a tenant's circumstances, particularly their financial position, allowing for constructive discussions with them about any risks or changes.
12. From April to September, 2016, 147 properties were let to people under 35 years of age. Of these, 46 were single and 32 were in receipt of benefits. Using these figures to project the potential impact, accumulatively, about 130 tenants could be affected by April 2019. However, there will be an unknown number of people to be taken into account who will be in receipt of Universal Credit by April 2019.

Developing a Preventing Homelessness Strategy

13. The Homelessness Act 2002, requires all local authorities to develop a Homelessness Strategy every five years based on a review of the local homelessness situation within their area and then publish a strategy setting out how they will tackle and prevent it. Darlington's current strategy covers the period to 2017 and a new strategy, which will cover a period of five years to 2022, is now due. It is anticipated that the draft strategy will be available for consultation in the late summer/autumn.
14. Over the next couple of months, we will be undertaking a number of visits to speak to commissioned providers involved with homelessness prevention to learn about the support and services they offer and also to see for ourselves the types of accommodation provided. Arrangements are in hand for us to visit :-

(a) the 700 Club;

- (b) the YMCA;
- (c) Foundation Housing;
- (d) Harbour Support Services; and
- (e) DISC housing.

15. The outcomes of the findings from our visits will help to inform the new strategy which it is anticipated we will receive as a draft in August/September 2017.

Support for Carers in Darlington

16. The 2011 census identified that there were 11,048 carers in Darlington, 2,758 of whom were providing care for 50 or more hours per week, with 197 of them being within the age group 0-15 and the largest group being within the 50-64 age group.
17. As part of our task and finish review group work on Dementia, we highlighted a need to look at the support available to carers, and we will be receiving a report at our June meeting on this. However, prior to this, we will be visiting Durham County Carers Support, which is the new provider of the service for adult carers, including parents of disabled children, to see how the new contract is operating and the support provided.
18. I, along with the Vice-Chair, will also be meeting with the representative group of carers on the Darlington Carers Strategy Steering Group to talk about their experiences and reflections.

Councillor Sue Richmond
Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee