
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.

Customer Engagement in the Housing Service

2. We received a presentation on how customer engagement in housing services has changed to meet the changing profile and expectations of tenants.
3. A revised structure of customer engagement was introduced in 2015 and, since then, a number of initiatives to ensure the voice of the customer is heard have been introduced, including the introduction of the Housing Connect website and Housing Connect magazine. A new role of Community Activities Co-ordinator has also been introduced to support a range of activities and events and is proving successful.
4. Part of the changing approach is to empower individuals and communities to take ownership and control and particular reference was made to the excellent work which is on-going on Red Hall and to transfer the learning from that to other areas of the Town to build resilience within communities. Identifying key assets within communities is key to building community engagement/participation.
5. We heard about a piece of work the Scrutiny Panel was undertaking in relation to the sign-up process and we are keen to meet with representatives from that Panel, the Customer Panel and the Complaints Panel.

Support for Carers in Darlington

6. We have received an update on the support available for carers in Darlington.
7. 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.
8. We were advised that although Darlington has a published Carers' Strategy and Implementation Plan and Young Carers' Action Plan for 2013-16, a one-year Implementation Plan was being worked on, whilst publication of the new national carers strategy was awaited. The Implementation Plan focusses mainly on work with health, schools and employers to raise awareness of carers and their needs and the support available to them and to increase career identification.
9. There is a Darlington Carers' Strategy Steering Group which meets six weekly which, amongst other things, takes the lead on the development of the Darlington Carers' Strategy and Implementation Plan, shares good practice and ensures that

the views of local carers and their voice is heard. I met with the representative group of carers on the Strategy Steering Group to talk about their experiences and reflections.

10. As a Scrutiny Committee, we also visited Durham County Carers Support, (to be known as Darlington 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. It is early days of the new contract, however, to date, they have registered approximately 400 carers. We will be inviting the organisation to meet with us again further in the year.
11. We heard that the Council has recently secured funding for a free one-year membership to Employers for Carers which will enable both the Council and small and medium enterprises in Darlington to benefit from its expertise around identifying and supporting employees who are carers. The take-up of this, to date, has been limited as it has just been publicised, however, it will be promoted as part of Business Week which is taking place in September 2017.

Year-End Performance and 2017/18 Indicators

12. We received information on the year-end performance for 2016/17 against the key performance indicators for Adult Social Care.
13. Overall, performance across the service is good, however, as expected, there are areas of challenge and these were highlighted in the submitted report.
14. The carers survey, which is carried out bi-annually, shows Darlington's performance as having fallen since the last survey in 2014/15. This fall is in line with both regional and national trend, however, further work will be undertaken during the period up to the next survey in 2018/19. Darlington has the highest response rate across the North for the second consecutive time, although response rates generally have dropped.
15. We were advised that our performance in terms of numbers of permanent admissions both 65 plus and 18-64 year olds to residential or nursing care was better than last year. People with learning disabilities/mental health in settled accommodation and employment both continued to perform well during the year. Although there had been a slight drop in the number of adults with learning disabilities in employment, this could be attributed to the number of adults retiring in the year.
16. We were also presented with a basket of proposed indicators, based on the main corporate priorities of the Council, for our Scrutiny Committee to monitor during 2017/18 and we were requested to consider whether we felt those indicators were useful, to enable use to challenge the service and to give us reassurance.

Work Programme

17. As part of our work programme, we are continuing with our visits to speak to commissioned providers involved with homelessness prevention. To date, we have visited the 700 Club, DISC housing and Harbour.
18. We have also visited Medequip, the providers of the community equipment service and we will be receiving a further report later this year on the spend and operation of that contract.
19. We received a very informative presentation from representatives of MAIN, an organisation which offers advice and services tailored to individuals and families living with autism, on the different types of autism, how wide ranging and complex the condition is and how it is characterised. This will help with a future task and finish piece of work relating to aspects of Learning Disability Services.
20. I will continue to update Council on this piece of work.

Councillor Marjory Knowles
Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee