
OVERVIEW OF HOUSING, 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. The Mindful Schools project is coming to an end during this Autumn term. Thirty six teachers from both primary and secondary schools across Darlington are now qualified to deliver mindfulness techniques to children and a graduation ceremony is planned for 28 November to recognise and celebrate their achievements. Completion of this training has shown a great deal of commitment and enthusiasm for innovative approaches from schools and it has been very well received and evaluated so far.
3. The Children and Young People Mental Health Local Transformation Plan (CYP MH LTP) which addresses the recommendations in the national CYP Mental Health Strategy: Future In Mind has been reviewed for 2017. This multi agency plan is led by NHS Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group and includes the Council and Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust.
4. Stoptober was a good opportunity to launch the Specialist Stop Smoking Service provided by North East Council on Addictions (NECA) and County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust. The service is fully operational and the Stop Smoking Hub (www.darlingtonstopsmokinghub.org.uk) is where people who are ready to stop smoking can be sign posted.
5. The public consultation on the re-procurement of sexual health and contraceptive service has commenced and is now in consultation phase. A survey is available via the Council's website (<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/consultations/>) which can be shared with local communities and groups. Any specific questions should be directed to Public Health.
6. The consultation on the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) is also underway. A (PNA) describes the health needs of the population and the services delivered by community pharmacies, either which are already in place, or which could be commissioned to meet identified health needs.
7. The PNA maps health needs and services to make sure there are no gaps; in order that the Health and Well-being Board can be assured that residents have good access to pharmacy services. The main purpose of the PNA will be to assist NHS

England to make decisions about whether additional pharmacies are needed in Darlington.

8. The Council recently hosted the North of England Health Inequalities Conference 2017 Inclusive Work: Inclusive Growth. I had the pleasure of attending the Civic Reception with distinguished public health guests and the Mayor. The event was a huge success and we showcased a lot of what we offer in Darlington.

Darlington Partnership

9. The Festival of Ingenuity held on 22 and 23 September and organised by the Partnership was a great success with significantly greater numbers attending this year's event. The Festival used the Riverside Park area behind Bishopsgate House for refreshments and entertainment, the first time that that area had been used for an event.
10. The Partnership is currently drawing up plans to hold a Volunteering Fair in February 2018. Last Year's event was attended by 57 voluntary and community organisations who recruited over 100 additional volunteers.

Welfare Rights

11. Full Service Universal Credit in Darlington is due to come into effect in April 2018 and officers are working with the local Job Centre Plus and Department for Work and Pensions to ensure residents are aware of the upcoming changes together with the need to be registered online before Full Service goes live to ensure they continue to receive their entitlements.
12. Whilst the transition to Universal Credit does not represent an immediate cut to the overall amount of benefits and tax credits received by households, due to transitional protections, residents entitled to claim elements of Universal Credit who make their claim, once Universal Credit is in place, are likely to be entitled to less than they would have been had they claimed prior to the introduction of Full Service, particularly in the case of those households eligible for tax credits.
13. The current annual value of unclaimed benefits and tax credits in Darlington is estimated to be in the region of £26 million.
14. Encouraging households to check their benefit and/or tax credits entitlement prior to the roll-out of Full Service Universal Credit, potentially at the same time as encouraging households already claiming to sign up online, could therefore have a significant positive impact for households, the local economy and the Council.

Health and Well Being Board

15. I chaired the meeting of the Health and Well Being Board held on 26 October 2017, at which a number of reports were considered including, the Special Educational Needs and/or Disability Strategy 2017/20, Children and Young People Public Health Overview 2017, Children and Young People Mental Health Local Transformation Plan, Health and Well Being Plan and the Health Protection Annual

Report. A draft Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment was also considered and agreed for consultation.

16. An update report was also provided on the work undertaken by Healthwatch Darlington and verbal updates were also given by the Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on the current position with Sustainable Transformation Plan (STP) and by the Director of Public Health on Health and Well Being Research.

Housing Services

Community Fund

17. A successful bid has been made by residents of Red Hall to the Community Fund to purchase plants to stock an area of land adjacent to their homes in Bisley Court which is in a prominent position near to the new housing and play park. Residents want to enhance the look of this area to reflect the improvements that have been taking place in Red Hall. As well as bidding for the Community Fund, approaches have been made to local shops to obtain free and discounted materials. Plants and herbs are now being grown which other residents are able to pick for their own use. This initiative has now been encompassed by the overall role of the Friends of Red Hall, a group of residents who have formed to create a voice and opportunities for the continuing development of Red Hall.

New Build

18. A new rolling programme of Council Housing is now underway with the first development of eight two-bedroomed apartments at Jedburgh Drive, Branksome having started on site with the assistance of grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). A second site at Whitby Way, Branksome, comprising of eight two-bedroomed houses has also recently successfully been awarded grant funding and a start on site date is currently being firmed up. Work is ongoing to develop a range of further housing sites across Darlington.

A Hand Up, Not a Hand Out

19. Building on the success of previous work at Red Hall a Holiday Hunger project, funded by the Big Lottery, was delivered by Groundwork Trust across four areas of Darlington during the Summer holidays. This was part of a larger North East project led by Child Poverty North East that covered six Local Authority areas. The project was based in Firthmoor, Skerne Park, Red Hall and Northgate and up to a total of 32 children attended each site and all four sites ran at full capacity. The project ran for four weeks and included two half days of activities plus meals and a day trip each week. A formal evaluation is taking place of the projects but informal feedback suggests that the project was very successful and met a need for this project during school holidays.
20. Organisers hope that the formal evidence from the project can be used to support a bid for longer term funding.

Energy Efficiency Project

21. The Wise Group which is a Social Enterprise has been contracted to provide energy efficiency advice for Council tenants. A representative of the Wise Group visits tenants in their own home and provides:
- (a) Advice on energy tariffs, including help to shift to the most cost effective tariff/supplier;
 - (b) Assistance with energy debts;
 - (c) Advice on how to get the best from the home heating system and how changes in lifestyle could lead to savings; and
 - (d) Write offs of energy arrears or obtaining payments through various charities.
22. The project is open to all Council tenants who are in need of assistance but priority has been given to those in debt or experiencing persistent condensation issues due to lifestyle. During the year the project has been running, savings of over £30K have been made for tenants as well as improving their health outcomes. It has helped free up Housing Officers' time traditionally spent on dealing with condensation problems and also helped protect the fabric of our properties.

Councillor A Scott
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Partnerships