
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.

Better Care Fund 2017/18 and 2018/19

2. We have received the 2017/18 Better Care Fund (BCF) submission and associated plans which have received full assurance.
3. The Plan, which has four National Conditions, will build on foundations laid in 2015/16 and 2016/17 in relation to admissions avoidance in over 65's, a joint approach to discharge management, reablement and intermediate care services, improving health in care homes and building a robust community and universal services offer in support of managing demand into the future.
4. In addition to the existing priorities, given there has been a steady upward trend in patients registered with dementia in Darlington from 0.7 per cent in 2011/12 to 1.0 per cent in 2015/16, dementia has had an increased focus in the Plan for the next two years, together with an increased focus on how the BCF contributes to the implementation of the New Model of Care proposed for Darlington.
5. The Plan has six broad workstreams to support the delivery of the BCF priorities and we were particularly interested in the work being undertaken in relation to delayed transfers of care (DToC) and the RIACT and Intermediate Care Service, which was central to keeping people out of hospital and for speeding their journey home if they were in hospital.
6. The Council's performance in relation to DToC is good, however, further work is being undertaken to ensure that that performance is maintained and the targets set out in the DToC metric are delivered and the existing strong relationships with partners are preserved.
7. As a result of an external review of the RIACT and intermediate care services in 2016/17, which identified a number of areas for improvement, work has also been undertaken to improve and streamline the pathway within the Council and an implementation plan has been developed. More focus will be made on 'step up' provision to individuals through short term support and reablement to avoid hospital admissions and permanent admissions to residential care.

Deprivation of Liberty

8. We have received an update on the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and the Deprivation of Liberty in supported living and home environments.
9. The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility for operating and overseeing the DoLS, which came into force on 1 April 2009, as an amendment to the Mental Capacity Act 2005, to ensure that individuals who lacked the mental capacity to consent to the arrangements for their care, where such care may, because of restrictions imposed on an individual's freedom of choice or movement, amount to a deprivation of liberty, have those arrangements independently assessed to ensure they are in the best interests of the individual concerned.
10. Following a Supreme Court Judgement in 2014, which effectively lowered the threshold for what constituted a DoLS, there has been a significant increase in the number of requests for authorisations as more individuals meet the criteria for being deprived of their liberty, which has placed an increased demand on the authority.
11. Additional resources have been required to ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations in relation to DoLS applications and work is being undertaken to reduce the reliance on independent Best Interest Assessors (BIA's) by making better use of BIA's within the Council and by training more social workers.
12. We were also provided with details of some examples of cases where the involvement of Best Interest Assessors had had a positive outcome for individuals.

Autism Review Group

13. We are continuing with our work to look into support services in Darlington for people with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). There are over half a million people in the UK living with autism and, if you include their families, autism touches the lives of over two million people each day. Using these figures, there are approximately 1,000 people in Darlington on the autism spectrum.
14. We have visited Daisy Chain, a charitable organisation, which provides services and activities for families and young people in the Tees Valley affected by ASD and have had an initial visit to see the facilities provided by the North East Autism Society at their premises in Newton Aycliffe. We have also met with a number of organisations and individuals who provide support.
15. One of the areas we are particularly looking at is the employability of adults with autism. Only 16 per cent of adults with an ASD are in full-time work and this figure has remained the same for the last decade. Most people with autism want to work, and have valuable skills and talents, however, it can be difficult for them to find a job. Simple adjustments at the recruitment stage and in the workplace can make jobs much more accessible.

16. We still have a number of people to speak to in order to gather information and we will be submitting our final report in due course.

Councillor Marjory Knowles
Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee