

HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 31 August 2022

PRESENT – Councillors Bell (Chair), Heslop, Layton, McEwan, Newall, Preston and Mrs H Scott

APOLOGIES – Councillors Dr. Chou, Mills and Wright

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Jill Foggin (Communications Manager, County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust), Dominic Gardner (Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust), Diane Lax (Healthwatch Darlington), Pauline Fletcher (NHS England and NHS Improvement - North East and Yorkshire), Tom Robson (Durham and Darlington and Tees Local Dental Network) and Dr Kamini Shah (Consultant Dentistry NHS England)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Penny Spring (Director of Public Health), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Matthew Hufford (Communication and Engagement Co-ordinator), Michael Conway (Mayoral and Democratic Officer) and Allison Hill (Democratic Officer)

HH12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

HH13 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 29 JUNE 2022

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 29 June 2022.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 29 June 2022 be approved as a correct record.

HH14 UPDATE ON NHS DENTISTRY DARLINGTON

The Senior Primary Care Manager (Dental Commissioning Lead – North East and North Cumbria), NHS England and NHS Improvement – North East and Yorkshire and Chair of Durham and Darlington and Tees Local Dental Network gave a presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on NHS Dentistry in Darlington.

In providing background on NHS dentistry, Members were advised that a patient could contact any NHS dental practice to access care; dental contracts were activity and demand led; contract regulations set out contract currency which was measured in units of dental activity (UDA) and these were attributable to a banded course of treatments; NHS dentistry regulations did not prohibit the provision of private dentistry by NHS dental practices; and in 2019-20 only 90.5 per cent of the total commissioned capacity in Darlington was being utilised.

Reference was made to the commissioned capacity as of August 2022 for general dental services; Members were advised of the additional services commissioned by NHS England; and Members were informed that Middleton St George Dental Practice handed back their

contract in 2020.

The pressures and challenges were outlined, these included Covid-19 impacts, workforce recruitment and retention and NHS dental contract; and details were provided of the package of initial reforms to the NHS dental contract, which were published by NHS England in July 2022. It was reported that engagement to inform the next stages of the reform programme had commenced.

Details were provided of the local measures and actions taken to date, including incentives for all NHS dental practices to prioritise patients that had not been seen in the practice within the previous 24 months (adults) and 12 months (children) who require urgent dental care; increased investment into the new Dental Out of Hours Service contract; and additional funding made available to practices who were able to offer additional clinical capacity above their contracted levels, of which take up in Darlington was limited to only one practice that delivered additional 15 sessions during February and March 2022.

The next steps to improve access to dental services were outlined and included a review of plans for the recommissioning of the activity lost from the Middleton St George NHS contract handback; seeking expressions of interest from NHS practices that may have the capacity and capability to deliver additional access as an interim measure to assist with the current demand for NHS dental care; and work with current practices to explore how NHS England can support them to maximise their clinical treatment capacity and make contracts sustainable in the long-term.

Scrutiny were assured that all NHS dental practices were able to safely provide a full range of treatments however demand for care remained extremely high with dental practices having to balance addressing the backlog of care with managing new patient demand; Practices had been asked to prioritise patients with the greatest clinical need; and opportunities were being explored to increase the clinical capacity available and improve access for patients.

Discussion ensued on the overall picture of dental practices in Darlington and which were NSH practices and the reasons why residents were having problems accessing dentists; and Members also requested some information on patients attending Accident and Emergency at the hospital to access care.

It was generally felt that the more information and simple messages could be provided to residents to explain the reasons why access to dental practices was a problem; outlining the clinical definition for urgent care and also explaining that residents are able to contact any dental practice and that they are not specifically assigned to one would be helpful. Members also expressed their concerns that the NHS Choices website was not kept up to date so that residents can have relevant information.

Further discussion ensued with the representatives from NHS England on how they were planning to encourage new NHS practices; what planning was being undertaken to allow for the infrastructure required within the Local Plan and further housing development; and what changes can the authority expect to see within the next six months.

Members were advised that NHS England priority was to ensure increased capacity for urgent care; source improved clinical capacity and progress procurement; support existing

practices to deliver the current level of commissioned capacity; prioritise areas where greatest improvement needs to be addressed; and incentivise new providers.

RESOLVED – That the Senior Primary Care Manager (Dental Commissioning Lead – North East and North Cumbria), NHS England and NHS Improvement – North East and Yorkshire and Chair of Durham and Darlington and Tees Local Dental Network be thanked for their informative presentation.

HH15 BETTER CARE FUND

The Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on progress of the submission of the Darlington Better Care Fund Plan for the 2022/23 programme.

The submitted report stated that the Better Care Fund (BCF) was a programme spanning the NHS and Local Government which sought to join up health and care services; and that integrated care boards (ICBs) and local government were required to agree a joint plan which was owned by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Details were provided of the four national conditions for funding, three of which remain as previous years, with a change to national condition 4, and the key metrics that the Plan should focus on; funding for 2022/23 was outlined; and the funding package was not new monies.

It was stated that the plan for Darlington was being drafted; that a service review was underway across all funded schemes and was due to be completed by the end of September 2022; and due to timescales the draft and final plan cannot be submitted to this Scrutiny Committee or the Health and Wellbeing Board for approval.

The Chair proposed that Members give further consideration to the submitted report at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – (a) That the progress of the draft plan be noted.

(b) That the changes to national condition 4 be noted.

(c) That this Scrutiny Committee gives further consideration to the submitted report at a future meeting of this scrutiny committee.

HH16 CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021-2024 UPDATE

The Assistant Director Housing and Revenues gave a presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on the Customer Engagement Strategy 2021-2024.

Details were provided of the increased customer engagement following the success of engagement events in 2021; regular events were being held in new locations and Estate walkabouts had been reintroduced in high profile areas; particular reference was made to

the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund engagement event and the estate walkabout in Firthmoor.

It was reported that the Council continued to be a member of Tpas, promoting, supporting and championing tenant involvement and social empowerment in social housing; details were provided of the Housing Webpage redesign undertaken in early 2022; and the Tenants Panel continued to provide feedback on a range of policy changes.

Reference was made to the Tenant Satisfaction Measures that were due to come into place in April 2023; that surveys would be sent to tenants and would cover Repairs, Building Safety, Complaints, Customer Engagement and Neighbourhoods.

Members noted the engagement work undertaken with refugee families; the Housing Annual Report was due to be released imminently and Housing Connect was due to be released in August 2022 and March 2023; and customer satisfaction surveys were being undertaken to ensure the local authority were carrying out high quality work.

Details were provided of Docusign, a new signature portal and its associated benefits; and reference was made to work planned in 2022/2023.

Members acknowledged the good work of the Tenants Panel within the community and that the feedback they provide be encouraged; noted the progress that had been made and that the service was more customer friendly with the use of Docusign.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

HH17 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest be included in the previously approved work programme.

Members agreed that a visit be arranged to the Drug and Alcohol Service (We are With You); discussed waiting times within the CAMHS service and agreed to examine potential improvements at a future meeting; and requested that Members receive a further update from NHS England on NHS Dentistry in six months time.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be updated to reflect discussions.

HH18 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Members were informed that the Board last met on 7 July 2022 and that the next meeting of the Board was scheduled for 22 September, 2022.

RESOLVED – That Members look forward to receiving an update on the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.