

ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 1 April 2025

PRESENT – Councillors Anderson (Chair), Crumby, Layton, Mamolotti, M Nicholson, Storr and Tostevin.

APOLOGIES – Councillor Donoghue.

ABSENT – Councillor Renton.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Curry.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Joss Harbron (Assistant Director - Adult Social Care), Christine Shields (Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation), Paul Dalton (Democratic and Elections Manager) and James McAllister (Democratic Officer).

AD41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

AD42 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 25TH FEBRUARY 2025

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 25th February 2025, be approved as a correct record.

AD43 CQC ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK - UPDATE

The Assistant Director, Adults, submitted a report (previously circulated) to update and inform this Committee on the CQC assurance framework and inspection outcome.

The submitted report stated that the CQC Assurance Framework for Local Authorities in England, introduced by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), was a structured approach to evaluating the performance of local authorities in delivering Adult Social Care services. It aligns with the goals of the Health and Care Act 2022, which aimed to ensure high-quality, equitable, and sustainable care for individuals in need.

The submitted report outlined how the CQC assurance Framework evaluated how local authorities assessed the needs of their population, provided support in the form of personalised care, ensured safety through high standards of care, and exhibited effective leadership in tandem with a motivated workforce.

The Assistant Director, Adults, then discussed the assessment criteria deployed by the CQC, outlining the four key themes that underscore such criteria, namely; Working with people, providing support, ensuring safety and leadership.

With regards to the methodology of evaluation, the Assistant Director, Adults, detailed how the CQC utilises data and evidence to review data from local authorities and service providers, conducts on-site inspection visits, and engaged with stakeholder feedback to

garner input from individuals utilising the service. The Assistant Director, Adults discussed the Outcome Ratings of other Local Authorities and outlined the categories by which such Local Authorities were rated on their performance, such as Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate.

Members commented upon the narrow margins of the scoring criteria, notably how a 5-point difference could separate a Local Authority from being “Good” or “Requires Improvement”. The Assistant Director, Adults responded by explicating the scoring criteria in further detail and outlined the process carried out by the CQC in producing the final score and commented that this narrow margin has also been challenged by other Local Authorities.

The Assistant Director then went on to discuss the improvement focus outlined in the framework. The Chair asked that this be taken into account and that the Darlington’s score be proactively responded to once returned by the CQC.

RESOLVED - That the contents of the report be noted,

AD44 MAPPING OF PROVISIONS WITHIN THE BOROUGH INCLUDING COMMISSIONED SERVICES

The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance & Transformation, introduced a report (previously circulated) regarding the mapping of provisions within the Borough which also made reference to commissioned services from external bodies. Emphasis was placed upon setting the standards for commissioned services in the context of the previously discussed CQC framework.

The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance & Transformation, made reference to the Livingwell Directory and Information on Commissioned Services, which internal members of staff within the council have access to and are encouraged to actively engage with.

The submitted report made reference to the Strategic Framework of Adult Social Care, specifically discussing The Accommodation with Care and Support Strategy 2024-2027, which has guided the provision of services in Darlington.

The aim of such strategy is to emphasise innovative housing solution, assistive technology, and the use of local provisions. The desired outcome of this being the reducing of reliance upon traditional residential care homes, increasing independence, and minimising the need for out-of-borough placements by meeting needs locally.

The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance & Transformation, went on to outline the key services and models offered by the service area. The report named the Supported Living service which accounted for: Houses of Multiple Occupation, Houses with Support, and Adult Social Care Services. The report demonstrated that Supported Living made provisions for individuals to lead fulfilling lives ranging from those who share accommodation with on site-support staff, those who share communal facilities, to those living independently.

The report also made reference to Specialist Services like the North East Centre for Autism who provide tailored support for individuals with autism and neurodiversity, in addition to outlining the Target Groups listed in the strategy.

The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance & Transformation, went on to address the challenges and future directions of the service, notably surrounding financial and demographical pressures. The report addressed potential innovative solutions such as reducing residential care usage and encouraging provider collaboration.

The report looked into the procedure of accessing adult care and support services in Darlington, outlining the various several steps in doing so, the institutions in Darlington who offer the service, and other preventative services such as Health and Wellbeing Programs, Social Prescribing and Assistive Technology.

Members posed questions regarding the assistive technology provided by the service area, and discussion ensued regarding the younger demographic being more likely to engage with this service and therefore emphasis is being placed upon building confidence in utilising the technology available.

Members welcomed discussion regarding the need to integrate the use of technology whilst also maintaining the “human touch” aspect of Adult Social Care, and as a result productive discussion ensued surrounding encouraging/training young people to join the service, specifically citing the Academy and Darlington Extra as avenues which garner interest for individuals to join the service area.

The Chair brought a close to the discussion by calling for introspective investigation into what is and is not provided already by the service area and how such can be improved. The Assistant Director, Adults, responded with reference to the commissioning of external services to cater for those provisions which are not already provided.

RESOLVED - That the contents of the report be noted.

AD45 SHARED LIVES

The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Transformation, submitted a report (previously circulated) on the Shared Lives model of support to provide an overview of the new service offer in Darlington. The introduction to this report depicted what Shared Lives is as a service and what the service offers in practice.

The report outlined how the Council had conducted a Homecare and Supported Living re-tender exercise in 2024, and how this exercise has resulted in a new Shared Lives service being established as a result to develop a robust Shared Lives offer in Darlington. The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Transformation, reinforced the area’s encouragement upon the community to utilise spare rooms to provide care, with those who engage being provided with full training.

Members commented upon the increasing trend of family members moving away from individuals in receipt of Adult Social Care, and how this has affected the strain on the service area. The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Transformation, shared this sentiment. Additionally, members questioned whether the offer of the Shared Lives service would result in an uptake in both recipients of the service and providers of care, to which the Assistant Director, Adults, responded by stating that there is no guarantee, and this trend will be evaluated as the service is deployed.

RESOLVED – That the contents of this report be noted.

AD46 WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

The Assistant Director, Law and Governance, submitted a report (previously circulated) which requested that Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during 2024/25, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Members opened discussion into potential focuses to be included in the forthcoming work programme for the new municipal year. As a result, Members of the committee commented upon successful areas of discussion in this year's cohort of meetings, and their intent to monitor the progression of such services in the forthcoming work programme.. Additionally, members addressed prior items that has been requested to be brought forward to the forthcoming work programme and urged other members of the committee to be cognisant of this.

RESOLVED - That the content of the report be noted.