

ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 10 June 2025

PRESENT – Councillors Anderson (Chair), Crumbie, Layton, Mammolotti, M Nicholson, Storr and Tostevin.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Donoghue and Renton.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Curry.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – James McAllister (Democratic Officer).

AD1 INTRODUCTIONS/ATTENDANCE AT MEETING

AD2 TO CONSIDER THE DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025/2026

The provisional dates set for this Committee were approved for the new Municipal year.

AD3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared at this meeting.

AD4 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 1ST APRIL 2025

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 1 April 2025 be approved as a correct record.

AD5 SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXECUTIVE STRATEGY PROCESS

The Head of Adults introduced a report outlining the Council's safeguarding responsibilities and the executive strategy process. A presentation was prepared in advance for the meeting which touched upon both areas, focusing upon the protection of vulnerable adults.

In terms of Safeguarding, The Head of Adults reinforced that Council operates under the statutory framework of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP henceforth), and that the Council has a responsibility to ensure that all commissioned agencies work in line with such framework and in line with the Care Act 2014.

With regards to the Executive Strategy Process, this was described as a multi-agency framework designed to address serious safeguarding concerns, including organisational abuse and complex cases. It ensures that safeguarding responses are coordinated, person-centred, and legally compliant.

The presentation detailed how the service area carries out a self-audit, identifying both areas of strength and areas of development and subsequently acting on areas that require more attention. Expectations and an improvement plan are outlined after also speaking to staff,

residents and family members to garner a more holistic view. The focus here being to ensure the safety of the current cohort of residents.

The Head of Adults made reference to the Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABS henceforth) which is required to be established by every Local Authority. The role of a SAB is to develop safeguarding strategies, conduct Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs henceforth), and promote inter-agency cooperation. With regards to SARs, such reviews must be conducted when an adult or is seriously harmed as a result of abuse or neglect, and there is concern about how agencies worked together. Here in the discussion, reference was made to a 'safeguarding triage', with both officers emphasising how human rights are at the centre of this practice.

The Head of Adults and Safeguarding Service Manager then alluded to care homes that are both still within and have passed through the executive strategy process, outlining reasoning for adoption into the strategy and satisfaction that certain establishments can exit the strategy.

Further reference was made to the service area's prevention duty, notably undertaking a risk notification pilot which has prevented 330 safeguarding incidents per annum thus far. Additionally, both officers touched upon the CPD delivered to staff, which they ensured was evidence-based training.

Brief reference was made to the recent CQC inspection carried out within the service area which returned a positive result, and Members shared very positive sentiments towards this and the staff within the service area.

In terms of areas of malpractice, there were multiple mentioning's of medication being distributed incorrectly, and this was picked up on and questioned by Members present at the meeting. Specific questions were posed regarding whether the multiple cases of this had similar causes, which the officers responded to saying that high levels of staff turnover and thus subsequent lack of training and sufficient management had resulted in an 'as and when' protocol being adopted in some cases which proved to be an issue. The officers addressed the efforts being made to combat this issue going forward.

Members also commended officers regarding the service area's constant engagement and dialogue with both providers and patients, connections built with staff, people and families, all of which having been recognised by the CQC inspection.

Members made reference to the positive feedback on the Risk Notification Pilot, asking a question regarding the level of inquiry's received, the conversion rate, and how the Council compares to neighbouring authorities. Officers responded with promising figures, especially considering the size of the team.

Finally, Members referred to the previously mentioned practice of monitoring closed cases and questioned whether this was over-management and perhaps not the best use of resources. Officers responded by reassuring the committee that this is a very successful practice as it allows the team to identify areas of success and ensure that this is continued going forward.

Recommended- That Members note the contents of the report and the subsequent presentation.

RESOLVED – Members noted the report and the subsequent presentation.

AD6 WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

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 2025/26, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Following the Annual Briefing of this Scrutiny Committee, a draft Work Programme had been prepared, and Members agreed that the provisional items and timeframes be approved.

Members requested that an items on the subject of Learning Disabilities and Adult Day Services be incorporated into the Work Programme for 2025/26, which officers in attendance agreed to facilitate.

The Chair reminded the Members that items pertinent to this committee which appear on the Forward Plan can be incorporated into the Work Programme without the use of a Quad of Aims.

The Chair also discussed the potentiality of Cross-Committee Scrutiny meetings to discuss items which fall under multiple service areas. This was well received and updates on such were agreed to be followed up.

AD7 SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM(S) (IF ANY) WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR OF THIS COMMITTEE ARE OF AN URGENT NATURE AND CAN BE DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING.

AD8 QUESTIONS