**COUNCIL
26 NOVEMBER 2020**

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

---

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Adults Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Covid-19 Response

2. The Committee received a verbal update from the Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Transformation on the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically in relation to care providers.

3. We heard that there had been five outbreaks of Covid-19 within care home settings since 28th September 2020, and that these had been robustly overseen by the Outbreak Control Team. It was reassuring to learn that two of the outbreaks had been closed down, two had been contained, and whilst the fifth care home was closing, this was for safeguarding reasons and not as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

4. We also heard that since the 28th September 2020, 82 residents in care home or domiciliary settings had received a positive diagnosis for Covid-19, and that 75 staff had been diagnosed as having contracted the virus, however we were encouraged to learn that the impact, to date, has not been as extreme as during Phase One.

5. Members of the Committee were pleased to learn that the local authority were working with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to support hospital discharge, with more resources being channelled into domiciliary care and the Rapid Response Team, in order to provide a 'home first' approach. Members also heard that designated beds had been identified in care homes and other settings for patients with a positive Covid-19 diagnosis, who were being discharged from hospital.

6. We also received information in relation to the release of the second phase of Infection Control Funding, and discussed the formal arrangements for our staff and care providers around infection control, and the concerns raised by the Director of Public Health in relation to car-sharing.

Deprivation of Liberty Update

7. The Committee received a report which provided an update on Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and Deprivation of Liberty in supported living and home environments, including outcomes for people. The report advised Members on the restrictions faced by DoLS assessors to date through the Covid-19 pandemic, and the changing Department of Health guidance. We heard that it is planned that DoLS will be replaced by Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) in April 2022.

8. Discussion ensued on the reason for the high levels of DoLS requests and authorisations in the North East of England, and the reason why some 701 requests in 2019/20 did not proceed to authorisation. Members examined the reasons for the

temporary redeployment of two Best Interest Assessors (BIAs) in 2019/20, the associated costs, and the reduction in training.

9. Members were also keen to ascertain how DoLS assessments were carried out during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic when face-to-face assessments could not be conducted.

10. Further concern was expressed in relation to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the potential effect that this may have on the introduction of Liberty Protection Safeguards, and the impact on the Mental Health of those who are unable to spend time with relatives in receipt of end of life care.

Loneliness and Connected Communities Task and Finish Group

11. The Loneliness and Connected Communities Task and Finish Group met with the Partnership Director on 5 October 2020, to learn more of the work of Darlington Cares, particularly in relation to the 'Good Friends Scheme', and were pleased to hear of the good work being conducted by EE in terms of their 'penpal' scheme.

12. Members are looking forward to hearing more about the Step Forward Tees Valley programme at a meeting of the Task and Finish Group scheduled for Tuesday, 15th December 2020, and are in the process of arranging a meeting with Ethne Parker, Wellbeing Service Lead at Primary Healthcare Darlington Ltd.

Councillor Anne-Marie Curry
Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee