

COUNCIL
26 NOVEMBER 2020

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Darlington Outbreak Control Plan

2. We received a further verbal update from the Director of Public Health on the Darlington Outbreak Control Plan. We were concerned to note that there had been an increase in the rate of new cases and that working age adults were showing the greatest increase in cases, whilst the younger age groups appeared to be plateauing.
3. Particular discussion ensued on pandemic fatigue and the importance of Members' support to the community, including the involvement of the community and local groups in identifying safe solutions and ways to reduce local risk, which would help raise public interest.
4. The key messages in respect of social distancing, the use of face coverings, regular hand washing, and not socializing with other households indoors were reiterated.

Tenancy Policy 2020-2025

5. We gave our consideration to the updated Council's Tenancy Policy 2020-2025, which proposed to amend flexible tenancies to apply to properties that have been extensively adapted and properties in areas of regeneration.
6. Members noted that the Tenant's Board have been consulted and supported the proposed changes. Scrutiny Members were in agreement with the proposed amendments to the Tenancy Policy.

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Update

7. We received an update on progress against the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and were pleased to note that of the 28 actions in the strategy, nine had been completed and 12 were progressing and on track to meet timescales.
8. We did discuss the issue of begging in the town centre and were assured by the multi-agency approach in place to manage begging and homelessness. Members requested contact numbers for the support services available to ensure that Members can respond appropriately to beggars and residents presenting as homeless.

9. Members were also updated on the homeless service provision during the Covid-19 lockdown period, noting the significant increase in demand for homeless and housing options as a result of the pandemic.
10. We were pleased to hear that despite the significant challenges, as part of the Council's 'Everybody In' agreement, everyone that was in need of emergency accommodation had been provided with somewhere to stay.

Crisis Service Changes Update

11. Jennifer Illingworth, Director of Operations, Durham and Darlington, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust provided an update on the progress in respect of the changes to the crisis service, with Members noting the implementation of a 24/7 telephone response via 111 in September.
12. We were pleased to learn that the crisis service received a non-recurring investment to develop urgent care services and provide support for the wider system, including increased capacity for home based treatments, and that this funding has also enabled mental health support to the North East Ambulance Service.

Right Care, Right Place Update

13. Members also received an update from Jennifer Illingworth, Director of Operations, Durham and Darlington, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust on the progress of the Right Care Right Place Programme.
14. Members were provided with an updated position of the key priorities and noted that whilst the formal priorities and actions had been paused due to COVID-19, work had been continuing to progress different ways of working.

Community Eye Care Service

15. Michael Houghton, Director of Commissioning, Strategy and Delivery NHS Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group provided an update to Scrutiny on the Community Eye Care Service.
16. We were informed that NHS County Durham CCG and NHS Tees Valley CCG (Darlington locality) awarded the contract for Community Eye Care Service to Primary Eye Care Services Ltd to deliver post-op cataract care in the community from autumn 2020.
17. The service will be delivered from high street opticians by qualified clinicians and practitioners. Members were assured that this would improve the patient pathway for those patients receiving cataract surgery as well as relieving pressure on the local hospital eye services, enabling the Ophthalmologist and team to manage those patients with more complex conditions, efficiently and effectively.

Work Programme 2020/21

18. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2020/21 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.

Quality Accounts 2019/20

19. Scrutiny considered the draft Quality Accounts 2019/20 of County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust at a special meeting on 7 October 2020 and have provided commentary for inclusion in the final Quality Accounts.

Councillor Ian Bell
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee