

COUNCIL
25 MARCH 2021

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. We received a verbal update on the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically in relation to care providers. It was pleasing to hear that the number of positive cases across Darlington was dropping, from 61.8 per 100,000 on 25 January 2021, to 6.6 per 100,000 on 27 February 2021, and that this was reflected throughout care settings. Recent contact with care providers had revealed that there had been no deaths attributable to Covid-19 within a care setting within the previous two weeks.
3. Members were informed that since 28 September 2020, 271 care home staff had been diagnosed with Covid-19, with 284 care home residents receiving a positive diagnosis. During the same period, it was reported that 73 staff in domiciliary care had been positively diagnosed with Covid-19, and that 33 service users had contracted the virus.
4. The Committee were made aware that there were six ongoing outbreaks within care home settings, and that these were being carefully managed with support from the Public Health Team and the Outbreak Control Team.
5. We were pleased to understand that 95 per cent of staff across the provider sector had received their initial Covid vaccination, and that this figure rose to 99 per cent when considering staff solely in care and domiciliary settings. It was noted that these figures did not include those staff who had not engaged with the vaccination programme, or those who were currently ill with Covid-19. Members were informed that 94 per cent of care home residents in Darlington had also received their initial Covid-19 vaccination. We were keen to know whether arrangements were in place to deliver on the recent changes to the vaccination programme in relation to those with learning disabilities.
6. We heard that staffing levels remained high, with just a four per cent absence rate across the care and domiciliary sector, however concerns were expressed, and shared by the Committee, in relation to occupancy and void levels, introducing a threat of unsustainability within the sector. We were particularly interested to learn more about the psychological support available to staff who were employed in care home and domiciliary settings throughout the duration of the pandemic.
7. The Committee also heard from Hayley Robertshaw, Director of Care and Development at St. Martin's Care, who have six care homes across the North East, including within Darlington. Ms. Robertshaw provided Members with an overview of the support received from Darlington Borough Council and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust, and this also provided a valuable insight into her

experiences of working in a local care home during the pandemic. Ms. Robertshaw was able to provide reassurances around the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in care homes, and we had an informative discussion on the approach being adopted by care providers whose staff refused the Covid-19 vaccine.

Councillor Anne-Marie Curry
Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee