

COUNCIL
30 SEPTEMBER 2021

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform and update Members on progress within Adult Services since the last meeting of Council. The following are the main areas of work under the Portfolio for Adult Services.

Operational Services

2. The new Assistant Director, Joss Harbron, started in post on 9 August 2021 focussing initially on recruitment and retention of staff, continuous improvement of practice and performance.
3. Demand across the services continues to be managed with a focus on a robust preventative approach with effective signposting and guidance through the Adults Contact Team (ACT).
4. We are maximising independence by focussing on strength-based approaches, with the person problem solving their care and support needs through guidance from the Ongoing Assessment of Intervention team (OIAT), the Response Integrated Assessment Care Team (RIACT), Mental Health and Lifestages teams.
5. We are providing care and support and periods of intervention through the Reablement team, with the aim of home first wherever possible after a stay in hospital or period of respite.
6. All teams continue to work in an agile way where possible and follow COVID-secure practices.
7. We are exploring the use of technology with the aim of enabling and supporting residents' independence. Work is ongoing with colleagues leading on the corporate Digital Darlington Framework to ensure the priorities and developments from this programme support the overall aims of the framework and are considered as part of the wider work programme.

COVID Funding

8. On 1 July, the Government extended the Adult Social Care Infection Control and Testing Fund to 1 September 2021. The Adult Social Care Fund was first introduced in May 2020 and its objective was to support adult social care providers in England to reduce the rate of COVID-19 transmission within care settings. The fund's purpose is also to encourage the increase in the uptake of staff vaccination and to conduct regular testing of staff and visitors in care homes thereby facilitating visiting wherever possible. Funding was extended in October 2020 and again in April 2021. This fourth round of funding amounts to £600,000 for care providers within the Borough of Darlington. The Fund will play an important role in supporting care providers as the sector moves forward during the COVID recovery period.

The Commissioning and Contracts team is overseeing the distribution of the funds and liaising with the care sector to ensure that all funds are effectively spent.

Commissioning and Contracts

9. The Commissioning and Contracts team have worked closely with Public Health colleagues to circulate new Government guidance issued on 16th August 2021 on exemption from the legal duty to self-isolate. Individuals will be exempt from the legal duty to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a confirmed positive test by NHS Test and Trace and they meet the exemption criteria. These include fully vaccinated adults - those who received their final, second dose at least 14 days prior to contact with a positive case and those individuals with medical exemptions and cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons. In addition, any Individual who was self-isolating on 16th August and was fully vaccinated at the point of their contact with the positive case will also be free from the legal duty to self-isolate from this date.
10. Regionally and nationally, domiciliary care providers have been experiencing significant staffing capacity issues as a result of the legal duty to self-isolate. However, the providers operating in Darlington have managed this difficult situation extremely well which has prevented hospital admission and has supported timely hospital discharge. Colleagues in the Foundation Trust have noted this support and have asked for their thanks to be passed onto providers.
11. The Commissioning and Contracts Team have completed the re-instated annual quality standards assessment Scheme in the Older Person's Care Home Sector. The scheme was suspended in 2021 during the COVID-19 Emergency pandemic. The quality assessments consist of a review of essential care standards including effective recruitment procedures, social and leisure outcomes, medication management and health and safety. Levels of compliance and resulting grades are linked to the weekly fee levels for the Council's commissioned placements. The Quality Standards Assessment Scheme was revised after consultation with providers to reflect the challenging COVID-19 environment in which they are operating. Care homes will be informed of the outcome of the assessments in September. Any amendments to fee levels will be back dated to April 2020.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

12. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners hosted a development session with members of the sub groups to reflect on safeguarding arrangements over the past year, working through COVID-19, to understand what is working well, where we are at, how to improve going forward and are we making a difference. Partners recognised how agencies had flexed and demonstrated professionalism during the Pandemic which enabled the identification of need and dynamic response to multi-agency working.
13. Two operational groups were formed to deal with critical work for both children and adults during COVID-19, which enabled partners to be assured that our most vulnerable were being seen and agencies had a line of sight on those children and adults.
14. Partners agreed there are further opportunities for joined up connectivity relating to issues such as homelessness, new requirements under the Domestic Abuse Bill and issues for

night time economy which includes violence against women and girls which the partnership will take forward.

Climate Change

15. Staff and new-starters continue to complete Academy 10 modules on climate change. The benefits of home-working with regards to saving fuel and improving air quality are also highlighted to staff as well as the impact of a paperless approach.
16. Team meetings feature a Climate Change item - team members are encouraged to make suggestions to aid climate change with one suggestion each month shared as “Idea of the Month” – September’s being for staff to ensure their laptops are fully shut down when finishing work.

Councillor Lorraine Tostevin
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults