

COUNCIL
30 SEPTEMBER 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. The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Transformation provided a verbal update on the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically in relation to care providers.
3. We were informed that there were outbreaks at two care homes at the time of the meeting – one Covid-related, and the other in relation to diarrhoea and vomiting – and that these outbreaks were being managed. The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Transformation advised that Care Home providers now had a mandate to ensure that all staff and contractors visiting a home had received two Covid vaccinations, and that all homes, apart from the two with outbreaks, were open in terms of visiting from friends and relatives.
4. The Committee were pleased to learn that staffing in Care Homes remained manageable, however we were advised that Home Care providers had undergone a more difficult period, but had managed well. It was disheartening to learn that staff recruitment remained challenging, however we were informed that this was a national issue, and that Officers were looking into the possibility of future support with this issue from the Darlington Care Collective.
5. Members were keen to establish whether Day Services had now returned to pre-Covid provision, and we were advised that services were being offered with safe working practices in place, however that it was noticeable that some service users had made alternative arrangements during the pandemic, and that the People Group would be subsequently reviewing the offer.

Adult Social Care Transformation Programme

6. We received a report to update Members on the progress of the Adults Social Care Transformation Programme. The report stated that the Care Act provided the context to review and implement a new operating model for Adult Social Care services to support the delivery of good quality services at a sustainable cost, and that the Transformation Programme was enabling the delivery of modern services which are Care Act compliant, and work in partnership with people to maximise their individual strengths and assets.
7. We were informed that the majority of projects were now complete, with all outstanding deliverables on track to be delivered by the end of 2021, although we were advised that the only exceptions to this were the Liberty Protection Safeguards Implementation which

will run to 2022, due to a delay in national legislation, and the Intermediate Care Provision Review, which had been delayed due to a reconfiguration of the Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Groups.

8. Members were keen to explore the reasons for the delays to projects and preparations for the White Paper, and we received confirmation that a draft project plan was in place. Members were interested to learn about the impact that the Covid 19 pandemic had on the work of the Mental Health Services Team and were advised as to the slight delays in the project, however we were reassured to discover that plans were in place to be on track again by the end of the year.
9. We noted the good service user feedback, but were interested as to the response rate, and we were heartened to be informed that the response rate was 100% as the survey was conducted as part of the closure procedure. It was suggested that future projects should seek to have an impact in terms of reducing carbon emissions, through shared transport, housing and renewal energy schemes.
10. We also received further information on the progress of the RIACT Project within the Transformation Programme, and further discussion took place on the use of surveys, cross-referencing this with the work of the Adult Social Care during Covid Task and Finish Group, and the input of, and feedback received by, staff.

Home Care and Support Briefing

11. The Committee were pleased to receive an update on the current Framework Agreement for the Provision of Home Care and Support, which will end on 1 October 2023, and it was pleasing to hear that since its implementation in 2017, the model has worked extremely well, and that this was particularly evident during the challenging times of the Covid-19 pandemic.
12. We were informed that a Service Review was currently underway to inform the future tendering of the contract, which would include feedback from providers, service users (via Healthwatch engagement sessions) and operational colleagues.
13. Discussion took place on whether there was any specialist support available for ex-Forces personnel, staff vacancies and in particular the competition from other sectors in terms of recruitment, the differing experiences received by service users from the primary providers, service user awareness in terms of the composition of their care package and how this might be improved, the pay arrangements for the primary providers including terms and conditions of employment, and the number of care packages within each category.

Work Programme

14. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22 and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Councillor Bob Donoghue, Vice Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee