

COUNCIL
25 NOVEMBER 2021

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the main areas of work under my Health and Housing Portfolio were as follows:-

Overview

2. In September the Government announced a review to assess the country's preparedness for autumn and winter resulting in the COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021 which outlined the Government's plans for autumn and winter in England which contained details about 'Plan A' and 'Plan B'.

Hospital activity

3. The numbers of those who were ill following a COVID infection and required treatment in hospital have remained largely stable and comparatively low compared to previous peaks in infection.
4. There has been an average of 73 patients with COVID 19 in County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust for the previous 3 months compared to an average of 110 patients at the end of last year.

Covid-19 Vaccinations

5. In total, 80,862 of Darlington's 93,813 residents aged 16 or older have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This equates to a first dose vaccination rate of 86.19 per cent.
6. Darlington's vaccination rate is greater than the England average of 80.45 per cent and ranks Darlington 19 out of 59 unitaries in England.
7. Following a recommendation by the Chief Medical Officer the government has implemented a school based COVID vaccination programme for those aged 12-15 which is being rolled out during the autumn and winter terms. Uptake of the vaccines in those under aged 15 - 19 years is 62.2 per cent.
8. This is being provided in local schools by the existing NHS providers of school-based vaccinations. Our local schools and academies are working directly with the NHS providers to ensure that Darlington pupils have access to this vaccination programme.
9. Our Vaccine Bus, previously the library van, has been commissioned by the Council and is operated in partnership with the NHS. The Darlington vaccination bus has delivered 18 sessions delivering over 1000 vaccinations to targeted groups and communities that have

been identified as having the lowest uptake. By providing vaccinations within these communities, the bus removes potential barriers to access and improve uptake and awareness of the programme.

COVID Booster Campaign

10. In line with new advice set out by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) on Tuesday 14 September, the NHS vaccination programme is now inviting eligible people, who had their second COVID jab at least six months ago, for a booster vaccine.
11. A nationwide advertising campaign was launched in October as part of the government's call to the public to get their COVID-19 booster and flu jabs, to protect themselves and their loved ones this winter.
12. The NHS started delivering COVID booster jabs to people in eligible groups from 16 September 2021.
13. The booster programme is being delivered through a range of existing NHS vaccination sites including community pharmacies, GP practices and hubs and vaccine centres.

Community Testing & Community Collect

14. Our click and collect community testing service continues to be available from sites in the borough.
15. As of 14 September 2021, the Council had directly undertaken 32,267 community tests across all our sites in the borough, including 4,416 click and collect kits being collected resulting in 51,318 tests being distributed by the Council.
16. In addition, orders can be made online for home delivered kits via: www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests or collected from community pharmacies.

Housing Options

17. I am pleased to report that our Housing Options Team has been recognised by the NEPACS Ruth Cranfield Award for their dedication in housing and tackling homelessness during the pandemic. Each year, the NEPACS Ruth Cranfield Awards highlight and celebrate examples of exceptional work by people in the North East in the cause of rehabilitating prisoners into society and helping to cut the risk of re-offending.
18. Our Housing Options Team and the 700 Club were among 19 organisations who received certificates of high commendation by the judges for their work and dedication in housing people and tackling homelessness during the pandemic.

Lifeline Services

19. A number of activities are being brought back into the sheltered, extra care and good neighbour schemes following the Covid lockdowns, to support the tenants around social isolation.

20. Scheme Managers are working with our Move More colleagues and our Housing Tenancy Management Section to bring different activities to support the tenants, which include coffee mornings, Arts and Crafts, Knit and Knatter, Fish and Chip Friday, Film afternoons and bowls.

Council Housing Gas Safety

21. As part of our statutory duty to undertake an annual service on all gas heating systems in our Council homes, 2,175 gas services were undertaken in the second quarter of 2021-22, compared to 1,463 for the same period in 2020-21.
22. We have been actively completing more gas services during the summer months in anticipation of higher demand for our responsive repairs services during winter. By undertaking more of this planned maintenance during the summer, we can ensure we have sufficient resources available for responsive repairs during the winter, reducing appointment waiting times for our tenants.

Council Tenant Engagement

23. With the easing of Covid restrictions, some face to face engagement with our Council tenants has restarted. Most recently, a multi-agency meeting was held at Park Place Community Centre where residents were able to discuss issues such as anti-social behaviour, building cleaning and parking issues with officers from Housing Services, Civic Enforcement, The Police, Street Scene and with Ward Councillors.
24. The feedback from residents was very positive as they could discuss their concerns and connect with each other in a friendly environment. Our tenants are at the heart of everything we do and we plan to expand these useful sessions to further venues over the coming months, as part of our Customer Engagement Strategy.

Consultation on Council Tenants' Terms & Conditions Changes

25. As part of vision to transform the Council, I'm delighted that we have recently commenced a consultation on the proposed new Council housing terms and conditions.
26. This is a significant update and has been long overdue. The new proposed agreement will enable us to better tackle some of the issues which blight our communities, and they will also reinforce the support and services we as a landlord provide our tenants.
27. Communications were sent out from Monday 8 November outlining the key changes and why they have been made. I would encourage all Councillors, tenants, and residents to get involved and feedback any comments and suggestions they may have.

Climate Change

28. I am pleased to report that we have been successful in bidding for an additional £277,501 through the Government's Local Authority Delivery (LAD1B) programme. We have already secured £984,352 through the LAD1B programme, providing new double-glazed windows

and loft insulation to 765 Council properties.

29. This additional funding will provide double glazing to an additional 110 Council properties and the work will be completed by 31 March 2022.

Dolphin Centre

30. The October Half Term Holiday Programme provided access for families in Darlington to swimming, bowling and soft play. The programme included Halloween parties and celebrations in both soft play and bowling, showcasing the new and refurbished facilities.
31. The Dolphin Centre team has been working with Darlington schools to get children caught up with their water education journey. This has included further intensive swimming lessons available to priority children within schools to give them the best possible chance of attainment by the end of year 6.
32. The events programme within the Dolphin Centre is beginning to grow with some speed and the Christmas Party Nights are selling very well; indications are that all three events will be expected to sell out.

Sheltered Housing Project

33. The Move More team have started delivering sessions to the sheltered housing schemes, outside initially and now inside as restrictions have lifted. The programme has engaged 76 residents from the sheltered housing schemes within Darlington so far this year. The gentle activity sessions are offered to all residents, with 13 sessions set-up weekly. The majority of the residents are aged 60 years plus. The activity sessions have had 761 attendances since the easing of restrictions

Eastbourne Sports Complex Development

34. On 9 November Cabinet approved options for the refurbishment and development of the outdoor facilities at Eastbourne Sports Complex, which was subsequently scheduled for approval at full council.
35. Eastbourne Sports Complex has been the council's main outdoor sporting hub for over 22 years and is used by a range of athletics clubs and schools. Attracting over 170,000 visits from across the borough each year.
36. The proposed plans include the release of £1.610m to progress with a fully refurbished athletics track, an additional Artificial Grass Pitch AGP and Improved parking & traffic management

Locomotives FC

37. Locomotives FC is a new girls football club now operating from Eastbourne Sports Complex. The Move More team has supported the club with various successful funding applications to the Football Foundation for new goals, floodlights and a container that will allow the 80 girls to train and play on site.

Outdoor Classes

38. The Move More Team continue to deliver a very successful outdoor programme at Eastbourne sports complex to encourage participants back to classes. The sessions range from walking groups, to Keep Fit and HIIT classes with a total of 10 classes over the week. The classes have been extremely popular with over 100 people attending each week.



Councillor Kevin Nicholson
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing