

COUNCIL
1 FEBRUARY 2022

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 produced the COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021, which reviewed the country's preparedness for autumn/ winter and contained details about 'Plan A' and 'Plan B'
3. On 8 December the Government confirmed that England would move to Plan B following the rapid spread of the Omicron variant in the UK.
4. Plan B measures introduced:
 - Compulsory face masks in most public indoor venues, other than hospitality
 - NHS Covid Pass to be made mandatory in specific settings, using a negative test or full vaccination via the NHS Covid Pass
 - People were asked to work from home if they can
5. The government will keep the data under review and the regulations are set to expire six weeks after implementation.
6. The self-isolation advice for people with COVID-19 changed on 17 January 2022. It is now possible to end self-isolation after 5 full days if you have 2 negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests taken on consecutive days. The first LFD test should not be taken before the fifth day after your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms). The self-isolation period remains 10 full days for those without negative results from 2 LFD tests taken a day apart.

Hospital activity

7. The latest hospital data shows that local hospital bed occupancy and admissions for patients with COVID -19 has been increasing since the new year.
8. There has been an average of 109 patients in hospital with COVID 19 in County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust and 5 patients in ICU. The rate of emergency admissions due to COVID has risen since the new year.
9. There have been two deaths reported for a Darlington resident within 28 days of a positive COVID-19 result in the last week (29 December – 5 January).

Covid-19 Vaccinations

10. We have continued to support the NHS in its efforts in improving vaccination uptake including the booster vaccine for those eligible. This includes working with the NHS in informing Darlington residents about the vaccine and how they can access it.
11. We have also continued to support the work of the Primary Care Network, Vaccination Centre and our local community pharmacies in their work to provide vaccines in the community.
12. The rollout of the vaccination programme continues at pace with the uptake improving week on week and now with the majority of those eligible in Darlington have now received three vaccinations.
13. Currently 84.9 per cent of all those aged over 12 years in Darlington have now received at least one dose of the vaccine, 78.9 per cent have received two doses and 61.8 per cent of all those who are eligible have received their booster. This corresponds to 223,124 doses of vaccine being given in Darlington since January 2021 which includes 61,127 booster doses given since September 2021.
14. Uptake of the COVID vaccinations in younger people continues to improve with 69.5 per cent of all those aged 18-24 having received two doses of vaccine. This is better when compared to the average for England (61.2 per cent) and the North East (65.3 per cent)
15. The uptake of those of school age (12-15 years) who are eligible continues to improve with 57.4 per cent having received their first vaccination since the programme commenced in the autumn school term. This compares to the uptake nationally of 51 per cent since the programme was opened to them this summer. The programme for the provision of second doses for this group has commenced in the new school term.

Community Testing & Community Collect

16. As of early January 2022, the Council had directly undertaken 32,267 community tests across all our sites in the borough and has issued 10,590 click and collect kits with a total of 86,497 individual tests.
17. Our click and collect community testing service continues to be available from sites in the borough. Our click and collect sites have remained open throughout and while the national supply difficulties have resulted in a knock-on effect for us, we have been able to manage our stock to maintain availability.
18. 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.
19. Darlington is part of a Local Tracing Partnership with NHS Test and Trace with local dedicated capacity to follow up hard to reach contacts and cases in Darlington to ensure that they are isolating, and the chain of infection is broken.

Public Health

20. The Healthy Lifestyle survey has been completed for this academic year with 8400 pupils completing the survey across 32 primary and secondary schools in Darlington. This survey, led by Public Health in partnership with Education and individual schools, represents a collection of data about young people's self-reported health and lifestyle related attitudes and behaviours in Darlington. The answers to the questions in the survey reflect emerging areas of interest and the changing environment in which children are growing up.
21. The process consists of an anonymous online survey which asks pupils about their experiences, attitudes, and behaviours across a range of topics related to health and lifestyle. Schools schedule time for pupils to complete the surveys as part of the school day to ensure maximum participation
22. The responses to the questions from the survey are analysed with the results for each school being fed back to each individual school through a Team Around the School (TAS) meeting.
23. The results from all the schools are then collated into a wider report providing an insight into the common themes and issues that are affecting children living in Darlington. This borough wide report is disseminated through a report to the Health and Wellbeing Board and Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny and shared widely with partner agencies including the NHS.
24. The results of the HLS help schools target support and interventions to support their pupils make healthy choices and seek appropriate support when required. These results are also used by the authority and other agencies in planning the provision and delivery of services for young people across the Borough.
25. Work on the Childhood Healthy Weight plan continues with a children's home food policy, guidance and workable menus being produced with children's home staff being trained on a young people's nutrition toolkit. Three nursery settings are working towards the Health Early Years Toolkit to achieve the award, with a further 10 childminders hoping to achieve this for their settings.
26. The Darlington School Food Award has been developed in partnership with Learning and Skills as an online training module to support individual schools to achieve school food standards.

Council Tenants' Terms & Conditions

27. As part of vision to transform the Council, I'm delighted that we have recently concluded a consultation on the proposed new Council housing terms and conditions. This is a significant update and has been long overdue.
28. The new terms and conditions are clearer to understand and introduces a zero-tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour.

29. The key changes to the agreement will put our communities first, by strengthening our position when dealing with problem tenants and making it easier for us to tackle some of the issues that blight our communities. The overall response to the proposals has been very positive and we have now formally written to all of our tenants to implement the new tenancy agreement.

Housing Services

30. Housing Services are now working in partnership with Energy Angels, providing an energy advice service to all existing Council tenants, including an impartial energy price comparison service. This will run alongside a move in support service, providing a smoother and less stressful move-in experience for all our new Council tenants.
31. Our Housing Options team has worked alongside our Health colleagues, to offer and deliver Covid vaccinations to homeless people in Darlington. The clinic was provided specifically for this client group to deliver all vaccinations including first, second and booster doses. Voluntary organisations including the 700 Club, Humankind and Foundation supported the clinic and encouraged their clients to attend. Those who attended also received food parcels.
32. We recently carried out our annual rough sleeper count of rough sleepers in Darlington and intelligence was gathered from partner organisations throughout the town including, voluntary sector groups, church groups, Health services and the Police.
33. Daily walkabouts were also conducted by the 700 Club who also provide our outreach support to rough sleepers. Although no one was physically found sleeping rough, the intelligence led us to concerns about 2 individuals and this was the final number recorded and returned to the DLUHC.
34. Lifeline Services were awarded the Exceptional Care Award sponsored by Primary Health Care, as part of the Stronger Communities Award 2021. This category recognises teams in Darlington which have provided care in a way that has made a real difference to people's lives. Our Lifeline team has worked continuously throughout the Covid pandemic to provide support to the most vulnerable in the town and I am immensely proud that they have been recognised for this.

Dolphin Centre

35. Funding has been secured for the referral team at the Dolphin Centre to complete a Level 4 Cancer Rehabilitation qualification with the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust Cancer Service.
36. The qualification will enable the team to work with people that have recently been diagnosed with cancer and those who are on long surgical waiting lists as a result of the pandemic.
37. The 2021 Christmas events programme was very successful and feedback on the quality of the events has been very positive.

38. The recently refurbished soft play and new bowling alley continue to perform very well against the business plan. The bowling alley welcomed some of the Treasury team along with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, for an event late November.

Holiday Activity Fund

39. Following on from the success of the Department for Education funded holiday programme in Easter and Summer, an exciting timetable of activities was planned for children in Darlington (who are eligible for Free School Meals) to access over the festive holiday period.
40. A total of 17 events were arranged throughout December; 6 aimed at engaging secondary aged children and 11 aimed at primary aged children with a total of 715 places available. The activities offered were available at various locations across the town. A hot cooked meal was provided at each event and further support was given to children and families by providing comprehensive activity packs and food bags for children to take home with them.
41. Ongoing work with DFE has secured funding for the next three financial years to deliver the HAF across the Town. £460,000 has been confirmed to deliver activities and provide hot meals for eligible children during School vacation periods for 2022/2023 with future funding to be agreed. It will enable thousands of young people from across the Borough, who receive free school meals, to take part in whole range of enrichment activities in holiday periods as well as enjoying a healthy meal and nutritional education.

Climate Change

42. Housing Services continue to invest and undertake works to improve the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of Council homes through works such as new windows, doors and insulation. The aim is for all Council homes to be at least an EPC rating C by 2030 and reduce energy bills for Council tenants.
43. Ongoing works in 2021 have meant that around 500 Council homes have received some form of energy efficiency work such as loft insulation, double glazing, solar panels or lower carbon heating systems such as Air Source Heat Pumps.
44. Further bids for funding to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) and Local Authority Delivery (LAD) programmes have been made and decisions are due in the Spring. We plan to use these grants, alongside investment from ourselves to continue to improve the energy efficiency of our homes.
45. As part of the MTFP which is to be consider later this month by Cabinet and Council £2m has been requested to replace the outdated mechanical and electrical installations within the Dolphin Centre. This is the final phase of the replacement programme replacing 40-year-old inefficient plant with update to new efficient plant.



Councillor Kevin Nicholson
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing