
OVERVIEW OF ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Darlington Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board Annual Report 2017-18

2. Ann Baxter, the Independent Chair of the Darlington Safeguarding Adult Partnership Board, attended our meeting to present the Board's 2017-18 Annual Report.
3. The Safeguarding Adult Partnership Board, which is a statutory body, is required to produce an Annual Report, which outlines its activities over the previous year and makes an assessment of the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within the local area. The report set out the progress against the six key principles, as outlined in the Care Act 2014 as the strategic aims to support good inter-agency Adult Safeguarding.
4. We discussed the challenges faced by the Board in relation to the increased demand for services within the context of reduced resources and the impact the changes to be brought in by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, may have on adult safeguarding.
5. Following the presentation by Ann, we were reassured that there was strong multi-agency partnership working across Darlington, with good practices and procedures in place and positive outcomes being achieved.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

6. We received an update on the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) which had come into force in England and Wales on 1 April 2009, as amendments to the Mental Capacity Health Act 2007 and in response to a breach of the European Convention on Human Rights, which found that, legally, adequate protection was not given to people who lacked mental capacity to consent to care or treatment and who required some restrictions on the liberty to keep them safe.
7. The DoLS continue to place demand on the authority in terms of the high number of requests being received, however, additional resources have been provided to ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations. Reliance on independent Best Interest Assessors (BIA's) has been reduced with the Council employing its own BIA's and training existing staff.

8. The Government are currently looking at reviewing the DoLS scheme with a view to it being replaced and we will be kept informed of progress and the outcome.

Quality Standards for Care Homes – 2018/19

9. The Authority's Agreement for the Provision of Residential Care for Adults and Older People with a Mental Health Problem, requires its Contract Officers to visit all contracted care homes for older people on an annual basis between April and June to monitor the care home against the agreed quality standards, which, along with the home's environmental grade determines the fee level for the coming year. The level of compliance is then graded A – C, with A achieving all ten standards and C with eight standards or less fully met.
10. Overall of the 18 homes visited, 12 homes have maintained the same grade as last year, four have increased their grading and two have decreased. It is pleasing to note the increase in homes achieving an A grade, however, it is disappointing to note that three previously C homes have not improved.
11. Written feedback will be given to providers and action plans will be required from each of the homes to address any shortfalls and the homes graded C will be monitored again by the Contracts Section against their outcomes and action plans in November/December 2018.

Adult Social Care Transformation Programme

12. We have also received an update on the progress of the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme, which has been developed to modernise services and meet future demands and address pressures within that service area. We were advised that the programme is progressing well with work in a number of areas complete and many more nearing completion.
13. The Programme is regularly reviewed with new work added and the scope of existing pieces of work widened as applicable.

Non-Residential Charging Policy Consultation

14. Following a complaint made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, the Council has undertaken a public consultation exercise on a specific aspect of its charging policy relating to Non-Residential Services in respect of the treatment of income from eligible benefits.
15. The current policy, approved by Cabinet in 2016, states that the Council **must** treat eligible benefits as income when considering what a person can afford to pay towards their care from their income. However, guidance and associated Regulations states that Councils **may** have discretion about the treatment of these benefits when completing a financial assessment and it is this element that was the subject of the four-week public consultation exercise.
16. We were advised that the recommendation to Cabinet was to continue to take the income received from benefits into account when completing a financial

assessment as to exclude these benefits would have a significant financial impact on the Authority.

17. As the previous Fairer Charging Policy and the incorrectly approved current policy does take income from benefits into account, applied assessments of individual contributions will not change and individuals will not be impacted further by the decision to continue to do this. The Policy is a framework document and any specific exceptional individual needs and circumstances can be addressed on a case by case basis.

Work Programme

18. We have commenced a short review to look into the impacts on Darlington residents of the welfare reforms and we have spoken to a number of organisations who provide support services in Darlington. If any Councillors have any individual experiences from ward residents they wish to share with the Group, please contact me.

**Councillor Marjory Knowles
Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee**