

**COUNCIL**  
**12 MAY 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

**County Durham and Darlington Adult Mental Health Rehabilitation and Recovery Services - Re provision of Primrose Lodge, Chester le Street Inpatient Service Update**

2. We welcomed a report from the Director of Mental Health and Learning Disability, Durham Tees Valley Partnership and the Director of Operations County Durham and Darlington, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust updating Members of the outcome of the further targeted engagement to support the proposal to relocate Primary Lodge Inpatient Rehabilitation and Recovery unit from Chester le Street to Shildon.
3. Members were provided with details of the key factors for the change and the targeted engagement plan which included a briefing document and bespoke surveys for service users, families, carers and referring organisations. We also noted that two forums were held to explain the proposal further and seek direct feedback.
4. We noted the survey responses as detailed in the report and that overall there was a high level of rated support for the proposal. The average rating for the proposal was 3.9, with 5 being fully support the proposal, with recognition and support of the importance of an improved environment of the Shildon unit and the ability of the staff to continue to support service users recovery. We acknowledged the concerns identified through the engagement process regarding the bed reduction from 15 to eight beds, but were assured that this would be safely and effectively managed through a phased bed reduction.
5. Members of this Scrutiny Committee support the proposal and relocation of the inpatient rehabilitation service to Shildon.

**Care Quality Commission Update**

6. We also received an update from the Care Group Director for Adult Mental Health services, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust on the work undertaken by the Trust following the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections of the Adult Mental Health (AMH) and Psychiatric Intensive Care Units (PICU) in January and May and visits to CAMHS, Forensic, Community Adult Mental Health and the Crisis Team in June 2021.
7. Scrutiny were informed that following the inspection, work was undertaken across the organisation, including community services, to improve systems and processes to safely assess and mitigate patient risk. This included all key risk information for patients being contained in one place and a range of quality assurance measures. We noted that a further visit was expected in the coming months.

8. We questioned staffing levels and were informed that significant work had been undertaken to address staffing levels and noted the range of incentives that were in place to recruit staff. We also highlighted concerns regarding CAMHS and were advised by the Care Group Director for Adult Mental of the actions in place, including a Keeping In Touch process for those on a waiting list and improved mental health support in schools, including online resources.
9. We look forward to receiving an update on CAMHS at a future meeting.

#### **Accident and Emergency Wait Times**

10. Scrutiny received a presentation from the Director of Performance, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust updating Members on Accident and Emergency (A&E) wait times.
11. Reference was made to the A&E four hour standard, Members were informed that following the peak of the winter pressure period, performance had been improving throughout March and there had been no 12 hour trolley waits during March.
12. The presentation outlined the new Emergency Department (ED) measures and we were informed that there had been a reduction in patients waiting more than 12 hours in Darlington Memorial Hospital (DMH) ED, with a decreased from 9.3 a per cent in January to 5.5 per cent in March and overall in March, 72 per cent of patients had been assessed within 15 minutes of arrival.
13. Scrutiny were advised that a key area of focus was ED and ambulance handover. Reference was made to the range of improvement actions in place, including dedicated clinical and management support for the ED to enhance the quality and safety of the services, recruitment of junior doctors and increased bed base. We also noted the rag ratings for the improvement actions.
14. Members questioned the impact of pressures in other regional ED's on Darlington and were informed that a Local Delivery Board was in place to monitor A&E performance and work was being undertaken by the ICB to ensure the right infrastructure was in the right place.
15. Discussion also ensued regarding the timeline for the additional wards in Durham and Darlington and triage and discharge pathways.

#### **Drug and Alcohol Service Contract – We Are With You**

16. We received presentation from the Contracts Manager and Executive Director of Services, We Are With You, updating Members on the Darlington drug and alcohol service that they deliver under contract on behalf of the authority.
17. The presentation gave a service overview, detailing the three key components which were clinical support, treatment and care and abstinence, recovery and wellbeing and the priorities of the service were outlined. Reference was made to the challenges associated with the delivery site and to the need for partnership working was highlighted.

18. We raised concern regarding the perceived lack of work by the new service. The Executive Director of Services acknowledged the need for improved communication with the local authority and stakeholders to ensure the work being delivered by the service was evident and that they were working to deliver an improvement plan agreed with the authority.
19. We also discussed the location of the delivery site; access for vulnerable residents and following a question, Members were assured that there was no waiting list to access the service.
20. Scrutiny were informed of a dual diagnosis pathway with TEWV and this would be extended to include Darlington and Members were reminded of the outreach work of the ACCESS Team who are employed by the authority.

### **Housing Management Policy**

21. Scrutiny received a report, requesting that Members give consideration to the draft Housing Management Policy prior to its consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 14 June 2022.
22. Members were informed that Darlington Borough Council provides over 5,300 high quality homes for local residents and that to enable the Council to manage these properties effectively, rental and service charge income from Council tenants need to be maximised to ensure comprehensive range of good quality housing management and support services is provided to tenants. The Housing Management Policy sets out how the Council will do this.
23. We noted that the housing management policy is divided into two main sections; Income Management, which details how the Council collects rent and service charges and recover arrears and debts from current and former Council tenants; and Tenancy Management, which details how the Council manages its properties and how decisions are made by the Council across a range of issues.
24. The Tenants Panel have been consulted on the draft policy in March 2022 and overall the Panel support the proposed Housing Management Policy. Reference was made to examples of the Panel's comments.
25. Members of this Scrutiny Committee support the onward submission of the draft Housing Management Policy to Cabinet.

### **Work Programme**

26. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.

**Councillor Ian Bell**  
**Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee**