

COUNCIL
29 SEPTEMBER 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:-

COVID-19 autumn booster

2. This winter it is expected that many respiratory infections, including COVID-19 and flu may be circulating at high levels – this may put increasing pressure on hospitals and other health care services. For these reasons, people aged 50 years and over, those in care homes, and those aged 5 years and over in clinical risk groups are being offered an autumn booster of COVID-19 vaccine. Appointments will be available from the National Booking Service shortly.
3. A booster will also be offered to front-line health and social care staff, those who care for vulnerable individuals and families of individuals with weakened immune systems.
4. The autumn booster is being offered to those at high risk of the complications of COVID-19 infection, who may have not been boosted for a few months. As the number of COVID-19 infections increases over the winter, this booster should help to reduce your risk of being admitted to hospital with COVID-19.

Public Health

5. A Health and Wellbeing Board workshop was held on 13 July where key partners from partner organisations signed up to the Mental Health Prevention Concordat. It was agreed by partners that the Health and Wellbeing Board would oversee the application for recognition of the Concordat with the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities over the next eighteen months.
6. There is now detailed work underway with all partners and members of the Health and Wellbeing Board to draft and submit a local partnership action plan to support our application for recognition.
7. Following the positive feedback from last year the authority has once again commissioned a summer activity programme for young people aged 7 – 12 years living in Darlington focussing on the green spaces across the borough.
8. The authority worked with the provider to expand provision to 15 sites with on average 20-25 individual young people attending each session at each site.

9. This programme resulted in over 185,760 minutes of physical activity being undertaken by over 258 young people aged 7–12-year-olds during 1548 individual contacts over the summer break.
10. There has been lots of positive feedback from participants and their families on social media and provided directly to the provider about how much participants enjoyed their experience. This feedback and other data collected throughout the programme is being collated and analysed by Public Health as part of the evaluation and to identify learning for other interventions aimed at this group.

Darlington re-set event

11. In July I hosted a partnership event with health colleagues from across Darlington.
12. The event considered our shared health and care challenges, and we discussed the changes to the CCG and the development of the Integrated Care System. As a result of the event a join plan is being created to maximise opportunities to deliver better health outcomes for Darlington's residents considering the Integrated Care System changes.

Health and Wellbeing Board

13. The Health and Wellbeing Board met on 22 September 2022. The main discussion items included the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment and an update on Winter Planning.
14. The Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment describes the health needs of the population and the services delivered by community pharmacies. Producing and publishing a Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment every three years is a statutory duty of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
15. Following a refresh and update of the information such as new housing and infrastructure developments and a period of consultation the new Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment has been signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board and is now published. This can be found on the Council's website.

Housing Services

Anti-Social Behaviour

16. I'm pleased to report that our Housing Tenancy Enforcement Team were recently successful in 3 cases to resolve ongoing and serious issues relating to anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Council accommodation.
17. Firstly, they obtained a Possession Order against a tenant living in a Council property in the Whinfield area and the tenant was subsequently evicted as a result. The tenant had subjected neighbours to various forms of ASB, which included significant noise nuisance, drug related ASB and disruption caused by visitors attending the address. Tenancy Enforcement Officers worked collaboratively with the Police and residents to secure this eviction.

18. In addition, Officers were also successful in obtaining a Possession Order and subsequent eviction of a tenant living in Council accommodation in the Firthmoor area. Officers worked with Police in relation to a cannabis farm found at the flat and a caravan illegally parked in front of the property.
19. The team were also successful in obtaining an ASB Closure Order for a property in the Branksome area after reports of suspected drug dealing, ASB and acts of violence and aggression. Peterlee Magistrates' Court granted the property closure order on the council owned flat after previous warnings had been ignored.
20. The property has now been closed for three months, meaning no one can enter the property for this period and anyone who breaches this order can be arrested. Housing Tenancy Enforcement Officers worked closely with Durham Constabulary to obtain this order.
21. These actions reinforce the terms and conditions of our new tenancy agreement that we will not tolerate ASB in our Council properties and that we will take swift action and firm action to ensure that our communities are a safe place to live.
22. The team has also taken part in ASB awareness week which ran from the 18 to 22 July. Housing Officers attended various community events in Darlington, supporting this national initiative, alongside the Police and our Community Safety partners.

Rent Collection

23. During quarter 1 of 2022-23, over £6.4 million of rent was collected by our Housing Income team and rent arrears figures have remained consistent. In addition, the team has been successful in securing £177,000 from the Northumbrian Water social tariff scheme for those tenants on low incomes and this has been applied to rent accounts.

Lifeline

24. To help cope with the hot weather over the summer, our Lifeline team carried out daily welfare phone calls to everyone in sheltered schemes and to other vulnerable Lifeline customers in their own homes. The calls involved checking on everyone's wellbeing and talking about keeping safe in the heat, staying hydrated and ventilation properties.
25. Where appropriate, officers contacted family members to ensure everyone was supported. In addition, Scheme Managers ensured communal areas in the Sheltered Schemes were well ventilated and residents received advice and support.

Afghan Refugees

26. Members will recall that Darlington pledged support under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme. 3 Afghan families, from armed forces backgrounds are now settled in Council housing in Darlington and are being supported by Housing Services.
27. Support has included:
 - (a) Help with obtaining the correct identity documentation and opening bank accounts.

- (b) Securing college placements and accessing English courses.
- (c) Securing work placements.
- (d) Help with utility companies and finding the best deals.
- (e) Registering with Doctors and schools.
- (f) Joining local social and sports clubs and integrating into the community.

Ukrainian Refugees

28. Housing Services has been successful in receiving 10 Bookmark Boxes for Ukraine children as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. 10 children who arrived in Darlington with their families as part of the scheme, received a box containing:
- (a) A tablet loaded with e-books, language and literacy apps
 - (b) Mobile data allowance on a sim card
 - (c) Books in Ukrainian and English
 - (d) A starting school stationary set
 - (e) Sensory games and story-telling aids
 - (f) Sticker books, activity booklets and colouring-in sheets
29. The box provides tools for children to adapt to life in the UK, provides comfort and healing and offers language support for the children to fully immerse and integrate. It will be their own precious treasure chest filled with items to make them feel welcomed and comfortable in their new surroundings, and to build their familiarity with the English Language.
30. I was delighted to join the team with delivering the Bookmark Boxes to Ukraine families in Darlington.

Door Replacement Programme

31. I am pleased to report that our door replacement programme for Council has now commenced, following the successful award of the contract to Anglian, who are also undertaking our window replacement programme at pace.
32. Over 1,500 homes are due to have their front door, rear door, or both doors replaced in 2022-23, with properties mainly in the Bank Top, Lascelles and Firthmoor areas.

New Build

33. Work has now commenced on the Neasham Road new build site, delivering 150 much needed affordable Council homes over the next 3 years. This is the biggest Council housing new build project for decades and will include:
- (a) 64 two bedroom apartments,
 - (b) 24 two bedroom houses,
 - (c) 42 three bedroom houses,
 - (d) 19 four bedroom houses, and
 - (e) 1 five bedroom children's home.

34. The site will also offer residents a rent-to-buy option as a first step to affordable home ownership. The first homes are due to be delivered in 2023.

Climate Change

35. Marshall and McCourt have now been appointed as contractor to deliver the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund energy improvement works to a number of Council homes. Improvements will include wall and loft insulation, new double glazed windows, solar panels and air source heat pumps. The work will not only reduce carbon emissions for these properties but will also reduce the energy bills for our tenants.
36. A tenant engagement event about the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund was recently held at Windsor Court with Housing staff, contractors and TVCA representatives in attendance, to discuss the works and share the benefits of the improvements with tenants, which was well received. Property surveys have started this month, with improvement works due to start in October.

Dolphin Centre Mechanical and Electrical Replacement

37. I'm pleased to report that Cabinet have agreed the release of £2.2m capital to carry out phase 3 of the replacement programme of the mechanical and electrical installations and equipment in the Dolphin Centre.
38. Cabinet also agreed the release of £325k capital to undertake localised repairs of the pool tank. Phase 3 is the final part of the overall Mechanical and Electrical replacement programme which will have a positive impact on energy usage due to old systems being replaced by modern energy efficient equipment.

Dolphin Centre

39. The Dolphin Centre swim teaching team visited 26 primary schools in July to deliver water safety talks to children prior to the summer holidays.
40. On Saturday 30 July, the Dolphin Centre launched its 40th birthday celebrations with a large event in the market square and a range of free sporting activities in the town centre, which was very well attended by families from across the town. The event was followed by a series of smaller events during the school holidays, including competitions and prize giveaways.
41. The Dolphin Centre team visited freshers' week at Darlington College in September to promote student memberships and the new addition of a student night in DC Bowl. The team used this opportunity to ask students what they would like to see in the Dolphin Centre and how we can better engage with them as a customer group. Work is currently underway to design an engagement programme with students in the town.

Holiday Activity Fund

42. Following the success of the DfE funded Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) programmes in 2021 and in Easter 2022, Darlington Move More team planned an exciting timetable of free activities and meals for children eligible for benefits related free school meals to access

over the summer holiday period.

43. A total of 70 events were arranged throughout the school summer holidays with over 2,000 places available. The activities, which all included a hot cooked meal for every participant at each event, took place at 16 different community venues across the town to ensure the programme had a broad range of venues that all children across the borough could access.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Nicholson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Councillor Kevin Nicholson
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing