

COUNCIL
29 SEPTEMBER 2022

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Update on NHS Dentistry

2. We welcomed a presentation from the Senior Care Manager (Dental Commissioning Lead – North East and North Cumbria), NHS England and NHS Improvement – North East and North Yorkshire and the Chair of Durham and Darlington and Tees Local Dental Network on NHS Dentistry in Darlington.
3. Scrutiny were provided background on NHS dentistry and we were informed of the commissioned capacity as of August 2022 for general dental services. The current pressures and challenges on NHS dentistry were outlined and included Covid-19 impacts, workforce recruitment and retention and NHS dental contract.
4. Members were provided with details of the package of initial reforms to the NHS dental contract, which were published by NHS England in July 2022 and that engagement to inform the next stages of the reform programme has commenced.
5. We acknowledged the local measures and actions taken to date, including incentives for all NHS dental practices to prioritise patients that had not been seen in the practice within the previous 24 months (adults) and 12 months (children) who require urgent dental care, increased investment into the new Dental Out of Hours Service contract and additional funding made available to practices who are able to offer additional clinical capacity above their contracted levels, of which take up in Darlington has been limited to only one practice that delivered additional 15 sessions during February and March 2022.
6. Scrutiny were advised of the next steps to improve access to dental services and we discussed the overall picture of dental practices in Darlington and the reasons why residents are having problems accessing dentists. We have requested information on patients attending Accident and Emergency at the hospital to access care.
7. Members felt that more information and simple messages could be provided to residents to explain the reasons why access to dental practices was a problem and to explain that residents are able to contact any dental practice and that they are not specifically assigned to one. We also expressed our concerns that the NHS Choices website is not kept up to date.
8. We also discussed how NHS England are planning to encourage new NHS practices, what planning is being undertaken to allow for the infrastructure required within the Local Plan and further housing development and what changes the authority can expect to see within the next six months. We were assured that NHS England's priority is to increase capacity

for urgent care, source improved clinical capacity and progress procurement, support existing practices to deliver the current level of commissioned capacity, prioritise areas where greatest improvement needs to be addressed and incentivise new providers.

9. Members have requested a further update from NHS England on NHS Dentistry in six months' time.

Better Care Fund

10. Scrutiny welcomed an update report on the progress of the submission of the Darlington Better Care Fund Plan for the 2022/23 programme.
11. The Better Care Fund (BCF) is a programme spanning the NHS and Local Government which seeks to join up health and care services and integrated care boards (ICBs) and local government are required to agree a joint plan which is owned by the Health and Wellbeing Board.
12. We noted that the plan for Darlington is being drafted and that a service review is underway across all funded schemes and is due to be completed by the end of September 2022.
13. We have agreed to give further consideration to the Better Care Fund Plan at a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

Customer Engagement Strategy 2021-2024 Update

14. We welcomed a presentation from the Assistant Director Housing and Revenues, updating Members on the Customer Engagement Strategy 2021-2024.
15. Scrutiny were provided with details of the increased customer engagement following the success of engagement events in 2021. We noted that regular events are being held in new locations and Estate walkabouts have been reintroduced in high profile areas.
16. Reference was made to the Tenant Satisfaction Measures that are due to come into place in April 2023, we noted that surveys will be sent to tenants and will cover Repairs, Building Safety, Complaints, Customer Engagement and Neighbourhoods.
17. Members acknowledged the good work of the Tenants Panel within the community and noted the progress that had been made and that the service was more customer friendly with the use of DocuSign, a new signature portal.

Work Programme

18. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2022/23 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.
19. We have agreed that a visit be arranged to the Drug and Alcohol Service (We are With You) and to examine potential improvements in waiting times within the CAMHS service at a future meeting.

Councillor Ian Bell
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee