

COUNCIL
24 NOVEMBER 2022

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Quality Standards Monitoring Outcomes 2022-2023 – Agreement for the Provision of Residential Care for Adults and Older People with Mental Health Problems 2013-2023

2. We received a report to inform the Committee of the outcome of the Quality Standards Assessment for 2022-2023, and to advise Members that the level of compliance against the quality standards will determine the fee levels for the current year.
3. The submitted report outlined the results of the Quality Standards for 2022–2023, which demonstrated a reduction in the number of homes who have achieved an A Grade, with 13 out of 19 (68%) achieving an A Grade compared to 15 out of 19 (79%) in 2021. Four out of 19 had achieved a B Grade, and 19 had achieved a C Grade.
4. Members entered into discussion on the sustainability of the occupancy rate, the timescales for improvement in those homes that were underperforming, the reasons why a home may fail in terms of nutritional provision, the impact of inflationary pressures in terms of the cost of living, the definition and criteria around environmental impact, the lack of evidence as regard the medication process, and staff training and development.

Transformation of the RIACT (responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team) / Reablement Team, and the co-location with the CDDFT (County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust)

5. The Committee received an update from the Head of Service and the Team Manager on the work of the RIACT (Responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team) / Reablement team, and the co-location with the CDDFT (County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust).
6. Members heard about the aims and objectives of the RIACT Transformation Project, the structure of both the Internal Reablement Service and the RIACT Team, the key elements of the service, the partnership work that is being undertaken, the performance of the service, including comparisons between 2020/21 and 2021/22, the outcomes, which included a summary of needs at the completion of reablement packages and the number of assessments and re-assessments, and customer feedback and stories.
7. Discussion ensued on the introduction of Reablement, the identification of those elements which did not work quite so well, the management of the expectations of the service users compared to the purpose of the service, the current staffing levels and the experience in terms of recruitment, the potential for partnership working with voluntary organisations, and potential budgetary constraints.

Reforms to Adult Social Care – Update

8. The Assistant Director - Adult Services outlined that the activity to plan for the proposed care reforms remained ongoing, and identified three main areas of focus – the Fair Cost of Care, CQC Quality Assurance Framework and the Charging Reforms.
9. In terms of the Fair Cost of Care, we were informed that the draft proposals had been submitted, and that the Council would receive feedback in early December.
10. The Committee were advised that work in terms of the CQC Quality Assurance Framework remained ongoing with the narrative, documentation and processes being prepared. Members were informed that the Council would be undertaking a conversation in late November with an ADASS Associate who will act as a critical friend to review our preparation, with a view to planning for the implementation of the inspection framework from April 2023 onwards.
11. In relation to the Charging Reforms, it was reported that work was continuing to identify the number of self-funders that we may need to offer support to. We were advised that Officers were also exploring how an on-line offer to provide both a Financial Assessment and a Care and Support Needs Assessment could be developed, as well as work being undertaken to identify the infrastructure required to track the self-funders, the care accounts and finances.
12. Member of the Committee entered into discussion on the charging reforms, in particular the work being undertaken to monitor financial thresholds to anticipate when self-funders may access means-tested funding to inform need as regard staff and resources.

Disabled Facilities Grant Policy Update

13. We received a report which provided the Committee with an oversight of the updated Disabled Facilities Grant Policy (DFG) and Regulatory Reform Order Policy 2022-2025, prior to its consideration by Cabinet.
14. The purpose of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is to fund adaptations to owner-occupiers, tenants of private rented properties and Housing Association tenants to enable people with a disability to remain in their own home and live independently across the Borough.
15. We were advised that the current DFG Policy had been in operation since November 2020, and closely followed the legislation and policy guidance that was current at the time of its implementation. We scrutinised several proposed changes to the policy, which were listed in the main body of the Cabinet report, which was appended to the submitted report.
16. The Committee examined the potential for insulation improvements and checks to ensure that homes are safe for individuals returning home from hospital, highlighted complaints in relation to the timescales between assessment and notification of the decision being made, and welcomed the extension of the scheme to include children with Autism. Members were keen to ascertain the oversight in terms of contractors, and the influence the Council had to address problems. We were keen to know more about the signposting of the DFG, especially in relation to those suffering from dementia.

Work Programme

17. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2022/23 and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Councillor Bob Donoghue
Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee