

COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 2023

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform and update Members on progress within Adult Services since the last meeting of Council. The following are some of the areas of work under the Portfolio for Adult Services.

Operational Services

2. Operational services continue to facilitate safe hospital discharges in a timely manner. The discharge to assess model is working well and we continue to utilise available capacity in reablement. We have seen an increase in referrals to facilitate safe hospital discharges and have ensured that 98% of reablement assessments are completed in 2 days. This is working well with positive feedback received.
3. Deborah Parker, Social Worker based in the OAIT team, has recently completed and presented a piece of work about Dyslexia. This was to raise awareness for practitioners and managers about how Dyslexia affects people within the workplace, and the best way to support employees, employers, and colleagues. It focuses on a “no one size fits all” approach to bring about a better understanding of fitting the support around the individual. Deborah has presented this to the Head of Quality, Workforce and Development, and a group of students / ASYE’s. The plan going forward is to present this to the senior leadership team and then across the wider workforce in adult social care. Moving forward there will be consideration of a podcast recording to be included as part of an induction for anybody in a leadership role.

Communications and Marketing

4. A profile of the Adults Learning Disability team appeared in the January 2023 edition of One Darlington Magazine, which was distributed in the first week of the month. A major regional campaign, Made in Care, highlighting some of the success stories of the industry, has also launched this month. A series of short social media videos, offering an insight into adult social care, is being prepared for February.

Commissioning and Contracts

5. On 16 December, the Council with its partner, the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) submitted to the Government their funding plans and associated schemes for the Adult Social Care Fund. Darlington Borough Council and NENCICB has been allocated a total of £856, 314. The objective of this funding is to: facilitate more people to be discharged in a safe, timely and effective manner to appropriate settings (including mental health in-patient settings), prioritise approaches to free up the maximum of hospital beds and reduce bed days lost and to boost adult social care workforce including recruitment and retention initiatives. The Adult Social Care Fund

must be spent between 1.12.22 and 31.3.23. The Adult Social Care Fund schemes are aligned with the Fund's objectives and were presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 15 December 2022 for discussion.

6. The Commissioning, Contracts and Brokerage Team is continuing to work with statutory, voluntary, independent sectors to ensure that there is resilience this winter period as the health and social care system faces unprecedented challenges. The well-established relationships and the additional capacity afforded by the Adult Social Care Fund schemes will enhance the support to local communities in Darlington through this challenging time.
7. In light of the national economic situation, there is now a degree of uncertainty with regard to the next steps in the national Fair Cost of Care Exercise and longer-term national funding streams. It is understood that the Government has committed to funding levels to remain at the 2022/23 levels for 2023/24 and confirmation is expected in the Local Government Settlement on 21st December 2022. The Council submitted to the Government the required Market Sustainability Plan and Fair Cost of Care statutory returns for review on the 14 October 2022. To date, no further updates have been received.

Disabled Facilities Grant.

At 10th January 2023 Cabinet approved the updated Disabled Facilities Grant Policy and Regulatory Reform Order Policy 2022-2025.

8. The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a means tested statutory grant provided by the Government to undertake adaptations to homes such as walk in showers, stair lifts, ramps, or building extensions for disabled adults or children to enable them to live independently in their own homes.
9. Disabled Facilities Grants are governed by housing legislation and therefore have set guidance and eligibility criteria which govern how funding can be allocated. Historically these conditions have restricted the way in which funding could be released which resulted in year-on-year underspends on the budget.
10. The Government has also increased the DFG grant paid to local authorities nationally, this increase in allocated Government funding together with carry forward amounts has resulted in a DFG budget for 2022-2023 of approximately £2.6M.
11. A Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order gives local authorities permission to broaden the scope of how DFGs are used to support housing renewal and assist with the improving housing conditions.
12. The updated Darlington DFG policy has therefore been developed in a way which will enable the Council to make use of the powers provided under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order and use the funding in an appropriate way, to the benefit of residents.
13. A summary of initiatives of new areas of expenditure facilitated by a revised DFG Policy including RRO Housing Assistance (2002) include:

- a. Waive the means test for certain items and raise the recovery threshold
- b. Additional costs to be charged to the DFG fund
- c. Amendments to the Kinship Care contribution
- d. Expand policy to widen the support that can be provided for Children and adults with autism/behaviours that challenge, including the provision of safe spaces
- e. Dementia Grants & Smart Home kits
- f. Home accident prevention or health and safety initiatives

Climate Change

14. We have encouraged teams to recycle their cards, wrapping and Christmas trees following the festive period.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

15. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners met in November and reflected on the Multi-agency Safeguarding Partnership Group meeting held in October, which had been a really positive and engaging session. It was agreed to host face to face three sessions each year with a flexible and thematic approach to agendas and discussion.
16. Statutory Safeguarding Partners were provided with an overview of the Modern Slavery Conference held in October, hosted by the Durham and Darlington Modern Slavery Network. The conference identified a requirement to develop a victim care pathway and practice guidance to support practitioners as well as mapping out voluntary/community services who provide support to victims.
17. The DSP Annual Report for 2021/22 has been published and the Independent Scrutineer is providing an overview of the report to Adult Scrutiny members in February.

Councillor Lorraine Tostevin
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults