

COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

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.

Dementia Care Services – Update

2. The Director of Place, North-East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, provided the Committee with an update on Dementia Services. The presentation advised Members of the current position in Darlington, together with projections to 2040, and gave an overview of the Well Pathway for Dementia, including the strands covering prevention, diagnosis, support, living and dying.
3. We entered into discussion on the size of the predicted increase in Dementia cases to 2040, and whether there were proposals for the budget to be increased accordingly. The Committee were also keen to learn more about the support available for carers within the home setting, and how the available support was communicated to carers. It was noted that some family members or carers may be reluctant to recognise or acknowledge early indications of Dementia.
4. Particular reference was made to the Crisis Team, and whether this could be accessed by the general population, or whether the support was only available to those already within the system, with a focus also made to communication and signposting of the service.
5. Discussion ensued on the improvements made to services, including advice on financial support and specialist equipment. Members were also keen to learn more about cross-authority arrangements, and how effective safeguarding measures were for those being cared for in the home setting.

Substance Misuse Service Update – Support Treatment and Recovery in Darlington Through Empowering (STRIDE)

6. The Contract Manager, We Are With You, and the Executive Director, Contract Management and Business Development, We Are With You, provided the Committee with a presentation on the Substance Misuse Service (STRIDE).
7. We heard that the service provided pharmacological interventions, psychosocial interventions, harm reduction and needle exchange, health and wellbeing assessments, group programme and awareness sessions, signposting and onward referral, ambassador training programme, and an outreach team to support adults who are finding it difficult to engage with the service. The programme included drop in sessions, awareness sessions and structured groups.

8. The Committee were advised that STRIDE worked with a range of partners, including the Police, Social Services, Children's Services, Safeguarding Teams, Housing Teams, the Darlington Carers Service, Mental Health Services (Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS), and domestic abuse services.
9. We were keen to establish when the service would be moving into the Tubwell Row site, and were pleased to learn that the operational team was ready, however were awaiting final agreement from Estates, although it was anticipated that the move would be within this financial year.
10. It was suggested that alcoholism within the Middle Class was on the rise, however that there was potentially a reluctance from those within this demographic to recognise the problem, and Members were keen to discover what targeted work was being undertaken to address this. Members were also keen to establish what work was being undertaken with Balance and our GP practices, and what was being done to liaise with habitual / binge drinkers.
11. Members were pleased to learn that peer-2-peer and outreach work was taking place, and requested more information about how this worked in practice.
12. Disappointment was expressed that there was no mention of organisations such as the 700 Club, Number Forty and the Y.M.C.A., however Members were reassured that work was undertaken with the voluntary sector. Members were keen to ascertain the number of service users per group, how feedback in relation to the service was obtained, and how many staff and partners carried Naloxone.

Performance Indicators Mid-Year Report 2022-23

13. We received a report which provided performance data against Key Performance Indicators for 2022-23, in line with an indicator set and Scrutiny Committee distribution agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group on 4 June 2018, and subsequently by Scrutiny Committee Chairs.
14. It was highlighted that twelve indicators are reported to this Committee, ten on a six-monthly basis, and two annually. Of the ten indicators reported on a six-monthly basis, two indicators showed performance better or the same compared to this point last year (ASC003 and ASC019); six indicators showed a decline in comparison to the same period last year (ASC002, ASC045, ASC046, ASC049, ASC054 and ASC055); one indicator showed a performance that was the same as the same time last year (ASC050); and three indicators were not comparable and were reviewed at a point in time (ASC208, ASC209 and ASC211).
15. Members entered into discussion on the lasting impact of the Covid pandemic on the performance information, and enquired as to whether Care Homes had seen an post-Covid increase in admissions. Members also scrutinised the figures in terms of the number of people with Learning Disabilities in Employment, noting the success of Hartlepool Borough Council in this area, and acknowledging that the true figure of those in employment could be higher, but many did not require Adult Social Care input.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report – 2021/2022

16. The Committee received a copy of the Annual Report of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP) for the period 2021/22. We were informed that the Local Safeguarding Partnership was required to produce an Annual Report to account for the Partnership's achievements over the previous year and make an assessment of the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within the local area.
17. The report outlined what the Partnership had done over the period 2021/22, drawing upon a range of data and information to outline the progress made and illustrate the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements across Darlington.
18. Members welcomed the report and entered into discussion on the work being undertaken in relation to self-neglect and hoarders, and what actions local Councillors could take in relation to concerns about vulnerable people. Members noted that the legislation governing children and young people seemed clearer than that governing the care of adults, and were keen to see information provided in 'layman terms'. It was acknowledged that funding remained an issue and a challenge, however Members we pleased to note that there had been no serious case reviews.

Work Programme

19. 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