

COUNCIL
26 SEPTEMBER 2024

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.

Public Health

2. We are working with Fresh to promote the Stoptober 2024 campaign to encourage people to quit smoking as part of this national campaign, as evidence shows that if someone can make it to 28 days smokefree they are five times more likely to quit for good. The Director of Public Health, Leader of the Council, a Stop Smoking Advisor and successful quitters attended a photo shoot at Hopetown, to be used as part of the campaign. The opportunity has also been used to promote the North East [Declaration](#) for a Smokefree Future.
3. We have launched the use of an App as part of an infection prevention quality assurance programme for adult residential care providers. It has been commissioned for 3 years initially, which will allow us to understand the impact of implementation and acceptability to users. Darlington is only the second community area in the country to do this
4. The App is matched to the requirements of the Health and Social Care Act and national infection prevention and control (IPC) standards. It is anticipated that a standardised approach across care providers will drive up compliance with requirements, prepare providers for success with CQC inspections, help reduce incidences of infection and outbreaks and reduce hospital admissions, which in turn should enhance the quality of life for service users. Care providers have been engaged in the process of planning for the pilot via direct conversation and briefing updates in a variety of forums. The App dashboard enables Public Health to have continuous oversight of IPC practice, with the system intended to replace the approach of an annual inspection and improve overall oversight of IPC practice. Environmental Health, Safeguarding and Commissioning colleagues have inputted into the development of the programme and will be able to utilise the information gathered, whilst area CQC colleagues have been consulted and are supportive of the programme. Regular reviews during the 3 years will be service user led with feedback gathered.
5. With support from the Association of Directors of Public Health North East and sustainable food partnerships the North East was selected as a regional partner for *Good Food Local* over the next three years. Good Food Local is a project run by Sustain (the alliance for better food and farming), funded by Impact on Urban Health. The work has included a regional benchmarking process to encourage local authorities to make commitments to 'good food'. A regional launch event is taking place on 26 September at Darlington College, with representation from local authorities and members of Food Networks across the North East and North Cumbria. The launch event will be an opportunity to share the

action plans which have been developed in response to the outcomes of the regional benchmarking and there will be guest speakers sharing expertise in areas such as food growing and community food action, healthy food for all, sustainable food economy and food for the planet.

6. We have been informed that Dame Carol Black, who carried out the independent national review on drugs which led to the 10-year Drug Strategy 'From Harm to Hope', is planning to visit Darlington on 11 September to see in practice how recovery and treatment services can work together in an integrated and purposeful way to deliver on key aspects of the national strategy. Our treatment provider (We Are With You) put forward the Darlington partnership with Recovery Connections and the council's ACCESS provision as an excellent example of how this can work well with positive outcomes for individuals, families and communities. It is a huge credit to everyone involved.
7. The areas of particular interest for the visit by Dame Carol Black are:
 - (a) the integrated/partnership working with a Lived Experience Recovery Organisation (LERO);
 - (b) treatment and recovery for those who use heroin/crack;
 - (c) diversion from prison, service in prisons and continuity of care on leaving custodial settings.
8. We have worked with our providers to plan the agenda for the day to showcase Darlington's partnership approach and emphasis on a holistic recovery focused treatment offer, whilst also highlighting areas of innovation and demonstrating the positive impact the increased national funding available to Darlington has had in supporting all of this work.

Director of Public Health Annual Report

9. The Director of Public Health is required to produce an independent annual report on the health of the local population, on a topic of their choice. The annual report for 2023/24 has looked at the issue of women's health and makes 3 overarching recommendations. The report is available here – <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/21677/director-of-public-health-annual-report-2023-24.pdf>

Housing Services

10. June saw Refugee Week, the world's largest Arts and Culture festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary, and the theme this year was 'Our Home'.
11. To celebrate the occasion, our Housing Services Refugee Team hosted an event at The Hullabaloo, which was entertaining, productive and educational but also displayed the amazing resources in Darlington and the support on offer. There was access to the Hullabaloo sensory area, a fire engine for children to enjoy investigating, a Ukrainian Orchestra; Kostia for people to enjoy, together with a wealth of agency stands offering practical advice, free services, events and guidance.

12. Naloxane Training – We are currently rolling out Naloxone training for Housing, Lifeline and Customer Services staff. This training is being provided by Public Health to enable staff to support harm reduction and provide support to individuals who may take an overdose.

Lifeline Services

13. A review of meals is currently being undertaken at our Extra Care schemes with the aim to improve the quality and choice for residents. Residents are being consulted as part of the review, with mystery shopping being undertaken by our Tenants Panel, which is also helping us to evaluate the current service.
14. A planned programme of works to upgrade carpets, decoration and furniture for the communal areas of our Sheltered schemes is currently being developed, with the scheme residents being involved in the planned works. New flooring at Park Place has already been installed as part of this process.

New Build

15. Work on the Sherborne Close Phase 2 new build site has now commenced, which will deliver 14 new Council homes, including a further 5-bedroom property for Children's Services. A previous funding bid with Homes England had already successfully delivered £0.545m towards the project but, following a further bid for funding, I am pleased to report that the Council has secured another £0.325m from Homes England towards the project. Completion of the site is due in September 2025.
16. As I previously announced, the first phase of our Neasham Road new build scheme has now been completed and I am pleased to report that the first 21 tenants have now moved in and are settling into their new Council homes.

Climate Change

17. Work has now commenced on our Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1 project. We successfully secured £1.461m of grant funding, which will be matched with our own funds to provide a £2.9m scheme, upgrading 130 homes in the Parkside, Redhall and Lascelles areas. Upgrades will include external wall insulation, as well as new windows and doors, providing warmer and more energy efficient homes.

Dolphin Centre

18. The newly refurbished toddler pool opened to public in August. The pool features new interactives and splash area, which has been very positively received by families. The reopening of the toddler pool also enabled the reopening of the popular slides. The pool complex is now fully open following a lengthy refurbishment period to ensure that Darlington has a pool for the future.

19. Dolphin Centre memberships are currently at the highest level in the history of the centre with over 2,400 live memberships in circulation. The centre has witnessed a noticeable increase since the reopening of the main pool earlier this year and real growth in student membership following focused marketing and student engagement work carried out in the last 12 months.

South Park Café

20. South Park has performed extremely well over the summer with hundreds of residents and families using the facility. Some recently installed outdoor permanent seating has been a welcome addition to the café over the summer, inviting park users to enjoy the facilities.

Holiday Activity Project

21. The HAF programme (Holiday Activities and Food) is for children who are eligible for benefits related free school meals. The programme ran for five weeks over the summer holidays with a vast geographical spread across the town. Over 4,000 places were available for children aged 5-16 years of age. A specialist SEND programme ran for five days at Beaumont Hill Academy. The programme had a digital presence in the town and was promoted on social media. A wide variety of physical and enrichment activities were provided including NE Wake Park, Learn to ride, Forest School, Junior First Aid and Surfing. New activities were introduced including a visit to Hopetown. Over 50 providers have delivered on the programme.

Health in Haughton Matters

22. The Health in Haughton Matters Project continues to record over 300 attendances each month. The programme consists of Tai Chi, Yoga, Pilates, Dance Fit and Low Impact Fitness. The Health in Haughton Matters Constitution continues to drive the programme across Darlington. The group have put a bid together for a National Lottery Awards for All grant for £20,000. The grant will allow four new sessions to be added to the provision over the next two years.

Councillor Matthew Roche
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing