

**ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22 OCTOBER 2024**

DARLINGTON CARE NETWORK FOR PROVIDERS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To review and consider the provider engagement arrangements that are in place for Adult Social Care Providers.

Summary

2. The Council's duties and responsibilities for Adult Social Care are set out in key legislation such as the Care Act (2014), the Mental Health Act (1983) and the Mental Capacity Act (2005). Commissioned services support and meet a wide range of adults needs such as frailty, learning disabilities or autism, mental illness and substance misuse. The Care Act (2014) places a legal duty on the Council to shape the care market and ensure that there is sufficient care provision to meet the care needs of the people in Darlington. The Care Act (2014) obliges the Council to "promote diversity and quality of provision of services". These objectives can only be met through active engagement with care providers which promotes effective communication, consultation and co-production.
3. Darlington Council has a successful track record of effectively engaging, consulting and communicating with its independent and voluntary sectors. There are a number of key forums, programme areas and information sharing approaches that the Council utilises to ensure that effective communication and engagement continues. The key objective of these engagement arrangements is to build and sustain positive and productive relationships. This in turn ensures that the council and its partners are sighted on the whole system issues and challenges and how they affect vulnerable people in its care.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that Members consider the effectiveness of consultation and engagement arrangements with Adult Social Care providers.

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Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Council Plan	This work contributes to the priorities agreed in the Council Plan
Addressing inequalities	There are no implications arising from this report
Tackling Climate Change	There are no implications arising from this report
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report supports the efficient use of resources through shared partnership priorities
Health and Wellbeing	This work supports the priorities set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications for S17 Crime and Disorder
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	All groups
Budget and Policy Framework	There are no implications for the Budget or Policy Framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Care Provider Engagement Arrangements

5. Engagement with Darlington’s providers is made up of three key approaches:
 - The need to effectively communicate with care providers to share (and receive) information and advice, and raise awareness of health and social care issues (national and local)
 - The requirement to consult on proposed council strategic plans
 - The need to co-produce commissioned services with care providers

6. The table set out below provides examples of how the council has worked with care providers in these care provider engagement strands:

Engagement	Activities
Communication	<p>Care Provider Partnership Forums – Older Persons and Working Age Adults Residential Care Providers Forum; Home care and Support care provider Forum,</p> <p>VCSE (Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise) Forum Sector.</p> <p>Bilateral meetings with Darlington’s two main home care providers (East and West) of the Borough.</p> <p>Quality Assurance and Contract Monitoring meetings.</p> <p>Darlington Carers Support</p>
Consultation	<p>The Market Position and Commissioning Strategy (2024-2027)</p> <p>The revision and updating of the Older Person’s Care Home quality assessment standards (2024)</p> <p>Market Engagement events to review Home Care and Support Services; Older Person’s Residential Care Homes, Working Age Adults Residential Care Homes, Supported Living arrangements and Shared Lives arrangements.</p> <p>The Council consulted with its home care providers with regard the allocation of Market Sustainability and Improvement Funds to support paying for travel costs (homecare), fee rates (residential care and homecare) and recruitment/retention incentives (all providers).</p> <p>The Council commissioned a survey with Healthwatch – “Adults Social Care Lived Experience” which sought views of people using adults social care with regards to people’s assessment and support planning process.</p>
Co- Production	<p>The joint development of specifications with the Working Age Adults residential care, homecare, supported living and Older Persons residential care providers .</p> <p>A joint exercise (with Darlington Healthwatch) to determine the future shape of Day Service.</p> <p>The development of the Carers Strategy - Darlington’s Commitment to Carers 2023-2028</p>

The benefits of effective consultation and engagement arrangements

7. The examples highlighted in the table above have ensured that care providers are active participants in supporting the Council in delivering its Care Act (2014) legal duties and obligations in shaping the care market. The development of constructive enduring relationships with the independent care sector ensures there is sufficiency of care provision to meet the care needs of the people in Darlington. It is also important to note that the positive working relationship with independent care providers and the VCSE (Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise) successfully supported the council during the difficult and challenging period of the Covid 19 emergency pandemic.
8. The positive engagement and consultation arrangements with Care Providers have been essential in:
 - The development of the Market Position Statement and Commissioning Strategy (2024-2027) as it sets out the key issues and challenges facing adult social care. Care providers are provided with analysis and data regarding demand and supply issues. This in turn can help care providers develop their businesses and invest with confidence in Darlington.
 - Establishing well attended provider forums for consistent messaging on key national and local issues such as workforce recruitment and retention, safeguarding and clinical matters (such as diabetes treatments); and sharing good practice in the delivery of services.
 - The transformation of day services through co-production will help to reshape and remodel services so that they more effectively deliver better outcomes for service users. This is because service users own experiences will shape the new outcome-based service specification.
 - Darlington's Carers Strategy Steering Group has been actively involved in the development of the Carers Strategy Darlington's commitment to carers 2023- 2028 and also raises awareness with key partners with regard to policy developments. For example, the Carer's Leave Act 2023 came into force on 6 April 2024 which provides that all carers in employment are entitled to a new statutory right to take five days of unpaid leave each year to fulfil their caring responsibilities.
 - Darlington Borough Council's Provider Forums including Home Care and Support Forum; Supported Living and Extra Care Forum. For example, the Older Persons and Working Age Adults Residential Provider Forum is a long standing multi – agency partnership body. Membership consists of representatives from the Council's Commissioning Team, Public Health, CDDFT (County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust), Darlington's Primary Care Network, Darlington's Healthwatch and NECS (North East Commissioning Support).

Key Areas for Development

9. Looking forward, the Council recognises the need to further strength its work on coproduction with key partners (Independent sector providers and NHS) and service users,

families and carers. It is important that that future services are developed which blend service users experiences and their aspirations within commissioned statutory services.

Outcome of Consultation

10. This report provides a summary of a range of consultation and engagement activities in Adult Social Care Services.