

**COUNCIL**  
**30 JANUARY 2025**

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**OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO**

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**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. During October, we launched a communications and marketing campaign for Stoptober encouraging people to make a fresh quit and self-refer to the Darlington Stop Smoking Hub. The campaign generated 72 referrals, which was double the number of referrals seen for the same period in 2023.
3. The Targeted Lung Health Checks (TLHC) will now be coming to Darlington in late spring and will be supported by the Stop Smoking Service. This is a national programme that identifies people aged 55-74years at increased risk of lung cancer, usually people who smoke or have smoked in the past.
4. The Government has announced that the additional funding allocated to local authorities this year, for investment in local Stop Smoking Services and support, will continue in 2025/26.
5. The Eyes on the Baby project is ongoing with the completion of training continuing to rise. The training comes in three strands dependant on the level of workforce interaction with vulnerable families in Darlington. To date we have had 42 people complete Strand 1, 37 complete Strand 2 and 39 Strand 3. This is a multi-agency approach that is so far engaging senior officers from across several of our internal departments, the 0-19 Service, Durham Constabulary and County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue, with more work to do until the pilot project is due to end in April. The training will continue to be in place locally with participation still encouraged.

**Health and Well Being Board**

6. The Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JLHWS) was approved at the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 5 December 2024. The vision of the Strategy is that Darlington is a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and live well. The Strategy can be accessed [here](#).
7. The Strategy takes a life course approach, underpinned by a focus on healthy places. The key priorities are set out below.

## Best Start in Life: Children and Young People

- (a) Pregnancy and early years
- (b) Mental health and resilience

### 7.1 Staying Healthy: Living Well

- (c) Making smoking history
- (d) Mental health and wellbeing

### 7.2 Staying Healthy: Ageing Well

- e) Minimise time in ill health
- f) Maximise independence

### 7.3 Healthy Places

- g) Workplace health and good work
- h) Healthier environments

8. Over the next four years implementation of the JLHWS will be underpinned by a detailed review of the eight priorities, with an annual programme to be agreed, focusing on two priorities each year. This will provide the opportunity for a 'deep dive' into each of the priorities, through which information will be shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board on performance indicators, health inequalities, programmes of delivery and any identified gaps or areas of risk. This work will involve different stakeholders as appropriate and relevant to the particular priority being reviewed and will be brought forward to the Health and Wellbeing Board for discussion, through which additional actions for partners on the Board, or wider stakeholders, may be identified.
9. During 2028/29 (the final year of the JLHWS) the Health and Wellbeing Board will focus on reviewing the overall impact of the strategy and learning from what has worked well and not so well. This will inform the development of the next JLHWS, from 2030 onward.

## **Housing Services**

### **Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

10. Consultation has recently ended on our Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030, which has been developed with the support of local partners and organisations including Commissioning, Adult and Children's Services, Health, Probation, Police, social and private landlords and the voluntary sector. The strategy will be considered by Cabinet on 4 March 2025.
11. Our strategy aims to be, not just a Council document, but one that is owned by partners and the people of Darlington. The strategy sets out our long-term vision, which is simple yet ambitious:
  - (a) To work in partnership to end homelessness in Darlington.

- (b) That every resident in Darlington has a secure, affordable place to call home.
  - (c) That the right support is in place at the right time.
  - (d) Where homelessness occurs it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.
12. The co-produced six key priority areas to enable us to achieve this vision are:
- (a) Working in partnership with charities and voluntary organisations, other social housing providers, Public Health and other statutory agencies to prevent homelessness.
  - (b) Tackling rough sleeping by implementing our agreed Rough Sleeper Plan.
  - (c) Increasing the amount and improving the quality of temporary accommodation.
  - (d) Addressing homelessness faced by particular groups of people, including those presenting with multiple or complex needs.
  - (e) Improving move on accommodation provision, including specialist housing and support provision.
  - (f) Securing funding to increase accommodation and resources.

### **Rough Sleeper Count**

13. As part of the Government's Rough Sleeper Initiative, an annual count of rough sleepers took place in November. The aim of the count is to ascertain how many individuals are sleeping rough through-out the North-East region on a specific night and all 12 Local Authorities in the region took part.
14. The count identified 6 people sleeping rough in Darlington. As part of our new Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, our aim is to eliminate rough sleeping in Darlington for good. Anyone who finds a person rough sleeping is encouraged to report them to Streetlink who will aim to connect them to local services. Further information can be found on their website at: [www.thestreetlink.org.uk](http://www.thestreetlink.org.uk)

### **Lifeline Services Meals Review**

15. Lifeline Services recently conducted a review and tenant's survey of the meals provision within our Extra Care schemes (Dalkeith House, Oban Court, and Rosemary Court). We asked our tenants several questions about the meals (taste, choice and standard), the service they receive, our staff and whether they feel the service provides value for money. A total of 62 responses were received and, by nature of the schemes where they live, many tenants were supported to enable them to express their opinions.
16. Overall, over 75 per cent of the tenants were satisfied with the meals and a lot of positive and constructive feedback was given, which we will use to continue to develop the service going forward.

## **Apprenticeships in Housing Services**

17. Members will be pleased to hear that our Housing Services teams continue to promote apprenticeships to provide people with a clear path to a career and the skills they need to succeed in our workplace.
18. We currently have a number of apprentices in Housing Services, as follows:
  - (a) Within our Housing Buildings Maintenance team, we have two Apprentice Joiners, one Apprentice Electrician, two Apprentice Plumbers and two Apprentice Plasterers. All apprentices will be working towards NVQ levels 2 and 3, and City and Guilds level 3 diplomas. The aim is to employ all of our apprentices within the Housing Buildings Maintenance team at the end of their apprenticeship.
  - (b) Within our Housing Building Surveying team, we have one Apprentice Surveyor working towards a BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment and we are aiming to have a permanent post available at the successful completion of the apprenticeship.
  - (c) We have a number of apprentices working towards a NVQ level 3 in Business Administration. Two apprentices in our Housing Asset and Compliance Team, one apprentice in our Lifeline Services team, one apprentice in our Housing Options team and one apprentice in our Housing Tenancy Management team. We are also actively recruiting to a new apprenticeship role in our Housing Refugee and Enforcement team. Towards the end of their apprenticeships, we will be actively supporting our apprentices to apply for suitable posts within the Council.

## **Tenant Involvement**

19. The Tenants Panel and Online Tenants Panel are a vital part of the services which we provide in Housing Services. The members of both panels give us a clear understanding of how the decisions we make with them, affect our tenants. With members involvement in implementing and changing policies and procedures, we have a clear understanding of what our tenants want and expect from us. More importantly, our tenants feel they have a voice and that they are listened to.
20. In December, Housing Services held a Tenants Panel Celebration event, which was attended by members of our Tenants Panel to celebrate their amazing work and the contribution to improving Housing Services over the last year. Tenant Panel members were thanked for all their work during the year and were commended for successful gaining an award through the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) for their contributions to the community.

## **Tenancy Enforcement**

21. Our Housing Services team continues to address serious anti-social behaviour, demonstrating our commitment to ensuring all of our tenants enjoy their right to a safe home and community.

22. An eviction was carried out in November 2024 for a tenant living in the Eastbourne area of Darlington. The tenant had subjected neighbours to various forms of anti-social behaviour, which included drug related anti-social behaviour, noise nuisance and damage to Council property. The Tenancy Enforcement Team worked collaboratively with the Police and neighbours to secure this eviction.
23. A Closure Order was obtained November 2024 against a tenant living in the Cockerton area of Darlington. The tenant, and numerous visitors to the property, had subjected neighbours to various forms of anti-social behaviour which included drug related anti-social behaviour and nuisance caused by visitors to the address. The Tenancy Enforcement Officer, who worked collaboratively with the Police to ensure the order was executed, attended Ward surgeries with the Police to re-assure residents and explain the actions being taken.

### Tenant Satisfaction Measures

24. Members will recall that I reported the outcome of our Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey for 2023-24, which showed high levels tenant satisfaction for our Council housing, reflecting the excellent services provided. The Regulator of Social Housing has recently published comparative data, which not only shows above average satisfaction for Darlington compared to other social housing providers across the country, as well as comparisons with other stock holding Local Authorities, but most of the measures place our services within the top quartile of performance.
25. The TSM survey for 2024-25 has recently been completed and I will report the outcomes for this as soon as it is available.

### TSM Results 2023-24

TSM	DBC Result	Average Result (all landlords)	LA Average Result	DBC Quartile
TP01 Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with the overall service from their landlord	76%	71.3%	68.2%	Quartile 1
TP02 Proportion of respondents who have received a repair in the last 12 months who report that they are satisfied with the overall repairs service	80%	72.3%	70.5%	Quartile 1
TP03 Proportion of respondents who have received a repair in the last 12 months who report that they are satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair	80%	67.4%	66.1%	Quartile 1
TP04 Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their home is well maintained	78%	70.8%	66.9%	Quartile 1

<b>TSM</b>	<b>DBC Result</b>	<b>Average Result (all landlords)</b>	<b>LA Average Result</b>	<b>DBC Quartile</b>
TP05 Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their home is safe	81%	76.7%	73.5%	Quartile 1
TP06 Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	66%	60.4%	55.8%	Quartile 1
TP07 Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord keeps them informed about things that matter to them	72%	70.3%	67.0%	Quartile 2
TP08 Proportion of respondents who report that they agree their landlord treats them fairly and with respect	78%	76.8%	73.5%	Quartile 2
TP09 Proportion of respondents who report making a complaint in the last 12 months who are satisfied with their landlord's approach to complaints handling	38%	34.5%	29.1%	Quartile 1
TP10 Proportion of respondents with communal areas who report that they are satisfied that their landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained.	68%	65.1%	63.1%	Quartile 2
TP11 Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood	65%	63.1%	59.5%	Quartile 2
TP12 Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with their landlord's approach to handling antisocial behaviour	58%	57.8%	54.0%	Quartile 2

### **Energy Efficiency of Council Homes**

26. As part of our Housing Services Climate Change Strategy, energy efficiency work on the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) phase 2 continues to be delivered in the Lascelles and Red Hall areas. Four properties have been completed in Lascelles, and work has commenced on a further 40 properties in this area.
27. The work includes the replacement of old external wall insulation and render, replacement of windows and old timber external doors, upgrading loft insulation, energy efficiency lights and improvements to ventilation in the properties. Enabling works have also commenced in Red Hall site with scaffolding being erected and the old external wall

insulation being removed on a number of properties.

28. In total, 130 Council properties will be upgraded by June 2025 at a total cost of £2.38m, including £1.27m of Government Grant funding. This demonstrates our ongoing commitment to improving the energy efficiency of our homes and reducing our tenants' energy bills.

### **Dolphin Centre**

29. The Dolphin Centre provided four very successful Christmas party nights during December which included a live band, three course meal and a disco. The events were attended by 700 guests and feedback from all evenings was extremely positive. December was an incredibly busy period for the team, with events every weekend, in addition to a very busy period of daily business in all areas.
30. Two new Student Champions have been recruited from Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College. The roles cover student engagement on what students would like to see available at the Dolphin Centre, mystery shopping in business areas and will also promote student activities and opportunities at the centre. The students have started by promoting the student discount card and student memberships.
31. As part of the conditions of the Swimming Pool Support Fund award that the Dolphin Centre received for the installation of PVs and a new CHP unit, Sport England arranged for a detailed Environmental Audit to be carried out on the Dolphin Centre. The audit rated the centre at 77 per cent which, given the age of the facility, was a positive outcome. There have been some useful suggestions that the team are currently considering as part of the mechanical and electrical project due to start in early 2025.

### **Holiday Activity Programme**

32. The HAF programme (Holiday Activities and Food) is for children aged 5 to 16 who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. The programme took place over the Christmas school holiday period providing Christmas-themed activities, including trips to the pantomime at the Hippodrome and Christmas activities at Hopetown. Darlington Borough Council are currently waiting for details on future HAF funding which will continue to allow eligible children to make the most of facilities available through leisure and cultural services.

### **Eastbourne Sports Complex**

33. Site visits to the complex have increased during the period of reporting, through engagement with new customers and sessions, including, sessions provided by The Extra Yard (who offer strength and condition activities for children and young people), indoor bowls for adults, Funability Club for children with SEND, and the site is now host to all Darlington District school teams. The team are working with Durham FA and the Football Foundation to improve the ancillary and grass pitch facilities on site, to increase footfall and to support the medium-term financial plan target.

## **Health in Haughton**

34. The Health in Haughton Matters constitution have been successful with an application to the National Lottery Awards for All grant for £20,000. This will include 'Move to Lose' sessions (incorporating weight loss goals), Mat Pilates, Netball and a children's sports provision put in place in the local area, adding additional activity to the current programme, which continues to receive over 300 attendances each month.

**Councillor Matthew Roche**  
**Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Health and Housing**