

**ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25 FEBRUARY 2025**

CARE HOMES IN EXECUTIVE STRATEGY MEASURES / ARRANGEMENTS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Adults Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the requirements on the Local Authority to support our statutory duties regarding organisational safeguarding under The Care Act 2014.

Summary

What is Executive Strategy?

2. It is a formal process specifically designed to bring together partner agencies to support services that are struggling to meet their contractual obligation to promote the safety and well-being of those they support. For the process to conclude, appropriate and sufficient assurances need to be evidenced, which highlights sustained mitigation of risk and improvement.
3. An Executive Strategy aims to look at the overall practice of those involved. It is a strategic approach and results in clear measurable action plans for a provider. Individual Adult Protection Strategies will still be used to address the needs of each Adult at Risk involved. The usual process for individual strategies will be maintained, and relevant information will be fed back to the Executive Strategy members.

Procedure considerations for Executive Strategy

4. Darlington Safeguarding Partnership's recently reviewed and updated Executive Strategy Procedure sets out the framework for dealing with serious safeguarding concerns on a multi-agency basis whilst maintaining the focus on the adult(s) experiencing or, at risk of abuse or neglect. The purpose is to bring professionals from relevant agencies together to:
 - a) Share information and discuss concerns about a service provider, organisation or complex individual case of alleged abuse.
 - b) Consider the level of risk and agree a proportionate response.
 - c) Plan the investigative framework.
 - d) Confirm the outcomes of any investigations.
 - e) Formulate a multi-agency action plan.

- f) Conclude the process when the necessary changes/improvements have been made.

Indicators that trigger consideration for invoking this procedure include:

5. Serious concerns are raised following individual or multiple safeguarding enquiries/investigations.
6. Contract compliance visits identify systemic issues within a care setting and there are significant concerns about the quality of care provided and the ability of the provider to improve the service.
7. Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections result in placing services into special measures, issuing warning notices or inadequate ratings for safety.
8. Multi-agency concerns about systemic problems within a service or organisation.
9. A series of safeguarding concerns are made about the same provider indicating that the provider is not operating a safe service.
10. A safeguarding enquiry raises serious concerns about a service or organisation.
11. A number of safeguarding allegations are made against more than one member of staff.
12. A cluster of concerns are received about similar issues, e.g. pressure ulcers; individuals not properly nourished or hydrated.
13. It is alleged that a number of perpetrators are suspected of abusing or neglecting adults, experiencing, or at risk of abuse and neglect.
14. A whistle-blower makes serious allegations about the management or regime of a service.
15. An individual case of alleged abuse is serious or complex, e.g. the alleged perpetrator holds a position of authority within a care setting/organisation.
16. An individual case of alleged abuse meets the criteria for a Safeguarding Adults Review.

Current care homes within Executive Strategy Procedures (ESP):

17. Since the last presentation in August 2024, Darlington Borough Council (DBC) Adult Social Care (ASC) currently have x2 providers within ESP.
18. **Nursing Home A** (41 bed Nursing home). Current occupancy: 28. Nursing Home A was owned by Churchlake Care and under administration for around 18 months until recently bought over by Luxe Manor Care Group. The new owners are supporting the organisations exit from administration and establishing services within the North-East.
19. Nursing Home A entered ESP 17 December 2024 following concerns in relation to:

- a) Increased individual Safeguarding concern referrals.
- b) Concerns relating to medication omissions following audits.
- c) Whistleblowing concerns received.
- d) CQC inspection identifying clinical oversight concerns.
- e) Environmental health concerns relating to infection control and establishment hygiene.

20. Actions put into place to support immediate improvement:

- a) Recruitment to support clinical oversight.
- b) Local Authority reviewing all DBC placed individuals and offering assessment to self-funders.
- c) Other placing LAs and ICBs informed to undertake assessments.
- d) Suspended placements - no new admissions.
- e) Clinical governance and competencies to be reviewed.
- f) Staff training programme to be outlined and implemented.
- g) Review internal medication and audit processes.

21. Due to being a nursing home, many reviews are planning jointly with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) due to Funded Nursing care and joint funding agreements.

22. **Residential Care Home A** (Residential care Home 27 beds). Current occupancy: 13. Residential Care Home A is owned by Saluten Care. Entered ESP November 2023 at that time occupancy was 23. Most residents were placed from out of area and needs derived from Mental Health and many individuals subject to s117 aftercare. Concerns were in relation to:

- a) Increased individual Safeguarding concern referrals.
- b) Concerns relating to medication omissions following audits.
- c) CQC inspection identifying clinical oversight concerns.
- d) Environmental health concerns relating to infection control and establishment hygiene.
- e) Concerns relating to self-neglect and acts of omission.
- f) Concerns held around the lack of care planning, risk assessments and physical safety.

23. At the time there had been a high level of staff turnover and limited management oversight.
24. Although the service remains in ESP, the provider has undertaken improvements across the last 14 months and is currently progressing with the action plan with the local authority and partner agencies to make the necessary improvements.
25. Suspensions were lifted but under conditions that admissions were not supported out of hours.
26. Commissioning have reviewed the charging framework as part of the wider review to enable the provider to employ appropriately skilled and experienced staff and have sufficient staff on duty to meet need.

Next steps

27. In relation to Nursing Home A, we continue to work closely with CQC and our contracting and commissioning partners both DBC and ICB as well as the provider to support ongoing improvements.
28. In relation to Residential Care Home A a further ESP meeting to be arranged to inform whether these improvements are now sustainable with clear embedded governance processes before closing to ESP.

Recommendation

29. It is recommended that:
 - (a) The committee note the detail within this report.
 - (b) Scrutiny is updated on a six-monthly basis on care homes/services in executive strategy measures.

Climate Considerations

30. There should be no impact or increase in carbon emissions in relation to the actions of this report.
31. The proposal will have no impacts on biodiversity.

Joss Harbron
Assistant Director of Adult Social Care

Background Papers

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

Council Plan	This report and activities are consistent with the aims of the council plan.
Addressing inequalities	This report and actions aim to address inequalities.
Tackling Climate Change	No impact within this report but will continue to be considered.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The report and activities will consider the effective and efficient use of resources.
Health and Wellbeing	The objectives an executive strategy process is to support and safeguarding the wellbeing and safety of adults within Darlington and is therefore aligned to the Health and Wellbeing Priorities.
S17 Crime and Disorder	N/A
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	People with care and support needs residing in Eastbourne Care Home and Ashleigh House, Family Carers.
Budget and Policy Framework	No impact on budget currently.
Key Decision	N/A
Urgent Decision	N/A
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.