

COUNCIL
27 MARCH 2025

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Adults Portfolio.

Operational Services

2. The on-site CQC (Care Quality Commission) Inspection has now taken place, with inspectors in the Town Hall the week commencing 20 January 2025, with further off-site virtual calls undertaken in the week commencing 27 January 2025.
3. During the on-site Inspection, Inspectors spoke with various Officers and Members and held themed focussed sessions and drop-ins with our frontline practitioners and managers. Practitioners spoke overwhelmingly positively about their interactions with inspectors and their opportunities to share and discuss the work they do.
4. Following the conclusion of inspection activity, high-level feedback was provided to the Executive Director of People (DASS) and Assistant Director of Adult Social Care. The feedback was positive in tone with CQC praising the supportive culture of the Council, the dedication of the teams and the examples of good practice that were evidenced. The outcome of the inspection will not be known until the final report is published. It is anticipated that the final report will be published in late spring.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

5. Following an increase in demand for DFG's and grant funding limitations a new process was developed and put into place from Autumn 2024. This new process through a risk and impact assessment, alongside governance and high support high challenge discussion, enables those with the most need and highest risk will be prioritised.
6. To date, Adult Social Care (ASC) have been able to continue to progress DFG's for those identified as high risk and high impact to independence. This has led to a wait list being held for those identified as lower risk and impact, however a robust system is in place to enable additional points which considers length of time waiting. Our position as of end of January 2025 is a wait list of 49. We have received an additional interim grant of approximately £170k and the grant for 2025-2026.
7. Darlington Borough Council ASC have been asked to present and discuss this new process with Foundations Housing, Home Improvement Agency and regional leads as an example of good practice, with the focus of supporting those in most need.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

8. DoLS referrals have remained stable. Agency Best Interest Assessors (BIA's) are beginning to reduce as legal refreshers have been supported and allocations are now being made to in house BIA's. BIA training is planned for February 2025 to enable additional BIA's to be trained. This intake will include x2 Occupational Therapists (OT) which supports wider development around Mental Capacity Assessments and Best interest decisions alongside legal frameworks within the OT team as well as supporting progression opportunities for OTs.

Safeguarding (SG)

9. The numbers of safeguarding concerns received have remained stable however, complexity of concerns received have increased. The main themes of concerns are self-neglect within the working age demographic. We have responded to this by utilising an approach of joint work between the safeguarding and front door teams to ensure early intervention to prevent harm and escalation of concerns.
10. Section 42 of the Care Act (s42 criteria) requires a local authority to make enquiries or have others do so if it has reasonable cause to suspect that an adult is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect, to see whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs. The enquiry aims to decide what, if any, action is needed to help and protect the adult. The Risk Notification pilot continues to impact positively reducing the number of Safeguarding referrals where s42 criteria hasn't been met by 200 since 1 April 2024. We have increased the pilot to include x6 residential care providers and x1 domiciliary care provider. Ongoing opportunities are observed to increase providers within this pilot. 268 appropriate risk notifications have been received to date. Work is ongoing to develop the pilot.

Adult Social Care Teams

11. **Hospital Discharges** - Following significant pressures within the acute health settings referrals have increased. Hospital discharge referrals have more than doubled over recent months which is reflective of the acute foundation trust pressures. This in turn has impacted on the increase in discharge to assess short break stay beds. These remain closely monitored and reviewed.
12. **ASC waiting lists** - Any referrals awaiting allocation are closely risk assessed and reviewed. We continue to monitor numbers as well as wait times and continue to explore approaches to reduce the length of time people wait to be allocated to a Practitioner. We are undertaking a deep dive of all people awaiting a Care Act Assessment and the numbers have significantly reduced to 78. All people waiting are low risk and have three-monthly contact to ensure needs have not changed. We anticipate we will be able to review this further in the coming months.

Commissioning and Contracts

13. The Better Care Fund Policy Framework (2025- 2026) was recently published by the Government. The Better Care Fund sets out national priorities and expectations across health and social care including improving hospital discharge arrangements, reducing

pressure on Urgent and Emergency Care, Social Care and Intermediate Care Services. The Government has emphasised the importance of strengthening neighbourhood services with the objective of providing more care closer to home; increasing focus on prevention and harnessing digital technology to transform care. The Council is working with the NENC ICB (North East and North Cumbria Integrated Commissioning Board) to ensure that the health and social care partners meet these planning requirements. Darlington's Health and Wellbeing Board will oversee the jointly agreed 2025/26 plan.

14. The new Home Care and Support Services Framework is now fully operational with effect from the 3 February 2025. Commissioning, Contracts and Brokerage staff have held a series of "welcome" meetings with care providers that are new to Darlington. Services include home care and support, supported living arrangements and a new "Shared lives" scheme for Darlington. The new framework supports older people, people with a learning disability, people with mental health needs including dementia, Autism (including Asperger's Syndrome) and for families with children
15. The Council has renewed its "Just Checking Scheme" which is a digital activity monitoring system used mainly in people's own homes. The scheme actively promotes independent living through monitoring of service users' movements and in particular, social workers use "Just Checking" during the assessment process. The scheme has been enhanced through the addition of heat and light sensors which tracks whether a home is kept warm for vulnerable people. This scheme is used to determine the most effective and cost-effective care and independent living arrangements for people with social care needs.

Councillor Anne-Marie Curry
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults