# COUNCIL 27 MARCH 2025

#### **OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Adults Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

### **CQC** Assurance Framework – Update

- 2. The Assistant Director, Adults, provided the Committee with an update on the CQC Assurance Framework and the inspection, which took place in January 2025.
- 3. As a reminder for Members, the CQC Assurance Framework for Local Authorities in England, introduced by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), is a structured approach to evaluating the performance of local authorities in delivering Adult Social Care services, and is aligned with the goals of the Health and Care Act 2022, which aims to ensure high-quality, equitable, and sustainable care for individuals in need.
- 4. The report provided an outline of the assessment criteria, the methods of evaluation, the outcome ratings, and the focus on continuous improvement by identifying strengths and areas for development, and updated Members on the inspection undertaken between 20th January 2025 and 24th January 2025.
- 5. Members felt that the inspection represented a refreshing approach, and sought clarification over the scoring system. Members were made aware of the recent final report received by Middlesbrough Council and expressed an interest in the feedback from colleagues from that Council on their report.
- 6. I met with the Senior Leadership Team recently to place on record my thanks for their work in preparing for the inspection, and I feel assured that there should be no unforeseen issues arising from the inspection..

#### Overview of Adult Self-Neglect reported into Darlington Safeguarding Partnership 2020-2024

- 7. The Committee received a report which provided an overview of self-neglect, including the local picture, for the period 2020-2024, as reported into Darlington Safeguarding Partnership, along with the trends, themes and key learning points.
- 8. We were informed that the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership was aware that self-neglect continued to be a challenge with numbers of reported concerns highlighting a steady increase year on year. The report stated that a key priority for the Partnership was to ensure partner agencies improved awareness and understanding of adult self-neglect to ensure early identification was achieved and, wherever possible, prevent serious injury or the death of adults at risk who appear to be self-neglecting.

- 9. In addition to the submitted report, the Safeguarding Partnership Business Manager gave a presentation which provided an overview of the local picture of adult self-neglect, and the definition and description of self-neglect. Particular focus was given to the Safeguarding Adult Review referrals and data reported into the Partnership relating to self-neglect, which highlighted there has been an upward trend, locally, regionally and nationally. The presentation covered the themes, trends and key learning points identified, and the work that the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership has undertaken in response to support those working with adults who self-neglect.
- 10. Members of the Committee welcomed the report and were pleased to note that self-neglect and hoarding were not viewed as 'a lifestyle choice', but rather a mental health condition, usually found alongside another primary diagnosis. We questioned the level of work that the Partnership could undertake with those who privately rented, and with private landlords, and further discussion ensued on the work undertaken by Environmental Health, and the mechanism for referrals to General Practitioners.
- 11. We explored the perceptions and misconceptions around hoarding, and the use of the 'Clutter Tool'. We were particularly keen to understand the information sharing arrangements in place with safeguarding partners, particularly in relation to the Fire Service, where early intervention and a shared Fire Safety Plan may result in lives being saved with the Committee being notified of how the Fire Service are able to identify vulnerable residents to target them for home fire safety visits.

## Performance Indicators Quarter 2 2024/2025

- 12. We received a report which provided Members with performance data against key performance indicators for Quarter 2 of 2024-25. The performance information was provided in line with an indicator set and Scrutiny Committee distribution agreed by the Monitoring and Coordination Group on 4 June 2018, and subsequently agreed by Scrutiny Committee Chairs. The indicators were aligned with key priorities, and twelve indicators are reported to this Committee, with the performance of eight of the twelve indicators as at the end of Quarter 2 2024/25, reported on.
- 13. Of those eight indicators, two of the indicators showed performance better than at this time last year (ASC002 Older people aged 65+ admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care per 100,000 of the 65+ population and ASC003 Adults aged 18 64 admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care homes, per 100,000 population); two indicators were comparable with the same time last year (ASC019 Percentage of people who have no ongoing care needs following completion of provision of a reablement package and ASC050 Proportion of carers using social care who receive self-directed support); one indicator showed a lower performance than at this time last year (ASC049 Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support), and three of the indicators were not comparable and were reviewed at a point in time (ASC208 Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support, ASC209 Number of Safeguarding concerns (initial enquiries) started per month, and ASC211 Number of strategy meetings undertaken, i.e. concerns progressed to strategy per month).

- 14. It was reported that the two indicators recorded annually (ASC054 The proportion of people who use Adult Care services who find it easy to find information about services and ASC055 The proportion of people who are carers who find it easy to find information about services) were not included within the report as the 2023-24 results would be released towards the end of the year, and would appear in the 2024-25 Quarter 3 Scrutiny report.
- 15. Members entered into discussion younger adults residing in older persons settings, the use of personal assistants to help those wishing to undertake self-directed care and payments and how this could be better promoted, and the reasoning why ASC045 (Proportion of adults with a learning disability who live in their own home or with their family) and ASC046 (Proportion of adults with learning disabilities in paid employment) were no longer reported on.
- 16. I reported to the Committee that I had recently contacted Darlington Association on Disability (D.A.D), with a view to extending an invitation for a representative to attend a meeting in the new Municipal Year and provide an overview of the support that the organisation provides, and a further discussion ensued on the cost effectiveness of direct payments compared to commissioned services.

### Care Homes in Executive Strategy Measures / Arrangements

- 17. We received our regular six-monthly report which provided the Committee with an overview of the requirements on the Local Authority to support our statutory duties regarding organisational safeguarding under The Care Act 2014.
- 18. The report outlined the process and considerations in relation to Executive Strategy, and stated that since the previous six-monthly report to this Committee, the Council only had two providers within Executive Strategy Procedures (ESP).
- 19. It was reported that the first provider (a nursing home) entered ESP on 17 December 2024, following concerns in relation to increased individual Safeguarding concern referrals, concerns relating to medication omissions following audits, whistleblowing concerns received, CQC inspection identifying clinical oversight concerns, and environmental health concerns relating to infection control and establishment hygiene. The report outlined the actions that had been put into place to support immediate improvement, and it was noted that the Council continued to work closely with the CQC and our contracting and commissioning partners and the Integrated Care Board, as well as the provider, to support ongoing improvements.
- 20. The second provider (a residential care home) had entered ESP in November 2023, following increased individual Safeguarding concern referrals, concerns relating to medication omissions following audits, CQC inspection identifying clinical oversight concerns, environmental health concerns relating to infection control and establishment hygiene, concerns relating to self-neglect and acts of omission, and concerns held around the lack of care planning, risk assessments and physical safety. We were informed that, although the service remains in ESP, the provider had undertaken improvements across the last 14 months and was currently progressing with the action plan with the local authority and partner agencies to make the necessary improvements, and that a further

- meeting had been arranged to ensure that the improvements were now sustainable with clear embedded governance processes before closing the ESP.
- 21. Members welcomed the report, and expressed the view that it was reassuring that the two providers were receiving additional support to improve. Discussion ensued on how such cases are identified, and clarified whether concerns can also be raised by whistleblowers from within an organisation or relatives.

### Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report - 2023/2024

- 22. The Committee received the Annual Report of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP) for the period 2023/24, which was introduced at the meeting by the Independent Chair of the DSP.
- 23. Further information on a house fire that had resulted in two deaths in May 2023 was requested by Members, and clarification was sought as to whether partnership working extended to the Probation Service, in relation to domestic violence. Concerns were raised in relation to 'cuckooing', and Members remained hopeful that new legislation would be forthcoming to protect vulnerable adults from being abused in this manner.
- 24. The Committee also placed on record its thanks to the Independent Chair of the DSP, who advised that she would be stepping down this year.

### Work Programme 2024/25

- 25. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the remainder of the Municipal Year 2024/25, and Members were encouraged to start to think about items that they would like to be included in the Work Programme for the new Municipal Year.
- 26. We also gave consideration to a request from the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee, that this Committee give consideration to the Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPE) data in respect of Care Homes and Domiciliary Care, and whilst we understand there is no data specifically around CPE in this area, the Committee gave consideration to including a wider piece of work on infection control in Care Homes and within Domiciliary Care on the Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2025/26.

### **Loneliness and Connected Communities Task and Finish Group**

27. The Loneliness and Connected Communities Task and Finish Group reconvened on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2025, with two further strands of work identified and arrangements will be made in due course.

Councillor Andrew Anderson
Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee