

**COUNCIL**  
**15 MAY 2025**

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**OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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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 inspection outcome from an 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), was a structured approach to evaluating the performance of local authorities in delivering Adult Social Care services. It aligns with the goals of the Health and Care Act 2022, which aimed to ensure high-quality, equitable, and sustainable care for individuals in need.
4. This report demonstrated how CQC assurance Framework evaluated how local authorities assessed needs and provided necessary support. Additionally, The Assistant Director, Adults, explained the assessment criteria of the inspection and the methodology used by the CQC. Reference was then made to how surrounding local authorities had been graded in accordance with this structure.
5. Members commented upon how the narrow margins of the scoring criteria could separate a Local Authority from being “Good” or “Requires Improvement”. Members were reassured that other Local Authorities had also flagged this concern, and were provided further explanation as to how the clear criteria used by the CQC establishes a fair result.
6. The Assistant Director, Adults, then went on to discuss the improvement focus outlined in the framework. I then asked that this be taken into account and that the Darlington’s score be proactively responded to once returned by the CQC.

**Mapping of Provisions within the Borough including Commissioned Services**

7. The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance & Transformation, provided a report regarding the mapping of provisions within the Borough which also referred to commissioned services. It was made clear to members that external bodies commissioned by the Council would also be made aware of the CQC guidelines and that they were to adhere to them.
8. Members were informed of both the Livingwell Directory and Information on Commissioned Services, which internal members of staff within the council have access to and are encouraged to actively engage with.

9. The report outlined the Strategic Framework of Adult Social Care, specifically discussing The Accommodation with Care and Support Strategy 2024-2027, and members were assured that this guided the provision of services in Darlington.
10. The aim of this framework is to emphasise innovative housing solution, the use of assistive technology, and the use of local provisions. The intent of this being the reducing of reliance upon residential care homes, increasing independence, and minimising the need for out-of-borough placements by meeting needs locally.
11. The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance & Transformation, discussed the Supported Living provision for individuals. Applying to those who share accommodation with on site-support staff, those who share communal facilities, and those living independently.
12. The report also made reference to Specialist Services like the North East Centre for Autism, in addition to outlining the Target Groups listed in the strategy.
13. The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance & Transformation, went on to address the challenges and future directions of the service, notably surrounding financial and demographical pressures. The report addressed potential innovative solutions such as reducing residential care usage and encouraging provider collaboration.
14. The report looked into the procedure of accessing adult care and support services in Darlington, the institutions in Darlington who offer the service, and other preventative services such as Health and Wellbeing Programs, Social Prescribing and Assistive Technology.
15. Members questioned the use of technology, and were reassured that emphasis is being placed upon building confidence in utilising the technology available. Discussion followed regarding the need to integrate the use of technology whilst also maintaining an element of “human touch”, and as a result we had a productive discussion surrounding encouraging/training young people to join the service.
16. I brought a close to the discussion by asking for a look into what is and is not provided already by the service area and how such can be improved, and I was reassured that any provisions we do not have capacity to provide currently are being provided by services out of area.

## **Shared Lives**

17. The Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Transformation, introduced the Shared Lives model of support and provided an overview of the new service offer. The report outlined how the Council had conducted a Homecare and Supported Living re-tender exercise in 2024, resulting in the establishment of the Shared Lives service. The Committee was made aware of encouragement upon the community to utilise spare rooms to provide care, with those who engage being provided with full training.
18. Members commented upon the increasing trend of family members moving away from those receiving Adult Social Care, and how this has affected the strain on the service area.

Additionally, members questioned whether the offer of the Shared Lives service would result in an uptake in both recipients of the service and providers of care, to which the Assistant Director, Adults, responded by stating that there is no guarantee, and this trend will be evaluated as the service is deployed.

### **Work Programme 2024/25**

19. We acknowledged that this was the last meeting of the Municipal Year, and that we were satisfied that all interests had been discussed sufficiently.
20. Members opened discussion into potential focuses to be included in the forthcoming work programme for the new municipal year. As a result, Members of the committee commented upon successful areas of discussion in this year's meetings, and our intent to monitor them going forward. I also urged members and officers in attendance to be cognisant of any items of interest that had previously been discussed, and to address them when compiling the forthcoming work programme.

**Councillor Andrew Anderson**  
**Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee**