

COUNCIL
15 MAY 2025

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Climate Change Strategy 2024-2029

2. We received a presentation updating Members on the Climate Change Strategy 2024-2029, noting the aims of the strategy and the actions taken in 2024/25 in relation to retrofit.
3. Members were informed that £1.27m funding was secured from the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund wave 2.1 and that this money has been used, alongside the Council's matched contribution to roll out retrofit works to 130 homes. This work is due to be completed in May 2025.
4. Further funding was applied for in September 2024 under the government's Warm Homes Social Housing Fund wave 3 and the Council was successful in the bid, securing £3.6m funding for a 3 year programme to upgrade 1600 properties. Members noted that the Council had committed over £4m each year over the lifetime of the MTFP for energy efficiency works.
5. Members were provided with details of the actions taken in 2024/25 in relation to new build homes, noting that new builds are built to a standard of EPC B, solar photovoltaics and air source heat pumps are included as standard and electric vehicle chargers would be installed in line with new building regulations.
6. In relation to EPC's Members were advised that 51 per cent of council properties now have an EPC C or above and that there has been an increase of 184 homes having reached EPC C or above from 2024 to January 2025.
7. We discussed those properties with low or no EPC ratings and were informed that stock modelling is undertaken for those properties with no EPC ratings and those properties with the lowest EPC ratings are in receipt of targeted work in the first instance.
8. Concerns were raised regarding the progress being made to retrofit the council's housing stock in order to achieve net zero carbon by 2050. Members were informed that the next wave of funding would enable work to be undertaken on up to 1700 properties, however there are a range of factors to consider and further clarity is required in relation to the government's plans for gas boiler installations.

Working Collectively to Transform the Mental Health System

9. We welcomed a presentation from the Associate Director of Partnerships and Strategy, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust updating Members on the work being undertaken to transform the mental health system. The presentation outlined the core aims and the vision of Community Transformation and reference was made to the expectations and impact of the model.
10. Members were advised of the plans for 2025 which include the commencement of peer support and autism support services in May 2025 and the key challenges of community transformation were outlined.
11. Members highlighted concerns regarding the visibility of Darlington Connect, despite its central location and it was suggested that Members provide further information regarding the service to residents via their newsletters.
12. Discussion ensued regarding the low percentage of patients requiring step up to secondary care services, the reduction in patients waiting for assessment, and staff turnover. Reference was also made to the importance of offering support and techniques to enable people to manage their own mental health and Members noted that Daisy Chain would be offering this service via Darlington Connect for people aged 16 years and above, for those with and without a formal diagnosis.

Children and Young People's Services

13. We welcomed a presentation from the General Manager – Durham and Tees Valley Community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust updating Members on the Children and Young People's Services in Darlington.
14. The presentation outlined average wait times for assessment and treatment, with waits for treatment dependent on the support required, wait time for specialist neuro assessment and services in place to help address waiting times. These services included Keeping in Touch process, transformation programme, Mental Health School Teams, with Members noting that Darlington is the first local authority in the Tees Valley to achieve 100 per cent coverage of all mainstream schools. Reference was also made to the regional work with partners to address the backlog and unmet needs of those waiting for neurodevelopmental assessments.
15. We were provided with details of regulatory activity, including a recent independent review undertaken by Niche Health and Social Care Consulting in 2024 and the work being undertaken to deliver on the Trust's priorities for children and young people service.
16. Following a query regarding support for those waiting for a neurodevelopmental assessment, Members were advised that support is available to children and young people without a formal diagnosis, that people are encouraged to access the bubble of support which is widely promoted, and that this is a key area of focus for the Trust.
17. Particular concern was raised regarding the lack of progress being made by services for children with autism. The General Manager Durham and Tees Valley Community CAMHS

acknowledged Members concerns, informing them of the challenges faced by the services in the years that followed COVID. Members were advised that there had previously been an exponential increase in wait times for assessments however this increase had started to reduce and that there was no additional funding for services.

Healthy Lifestyle Survey

18. We received an overview of the current Healthy Lifestyle Survey, including headlines of the 2024/25 survey and a timeline for the consultation and review taking place.
19. The survey, which has been delivered in Darlington for 14 years, is offered to all primary and secondary schools across the Darlington Borough and there are two surveys, one on wellbeing and relationships and one on health.
20. Members were provided with details of the topics covered by the surveys and reference was made to the headlines for both primary and secondary schools.
21. We discussed topics not included in the surveys, gambling and addictive behaviour and consent.
22. Members support the continuation of the Healthy Lifestyle Survey, and where possible will share the positive messages captured through the survey.

Supporting Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing in Schools – Conference

23. Members received an overview of the Supporting Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing in Schools conference, held on 11 February 2025. This was organised and facilitated by the Public Health Team.
24. Members noted that there were 103 delegates in attendance from 33 schools and 14 local and national services which support work in schools. The event included seven workshops, eight speakers delivering a range of regional and local updates and the launch of the consultation on the Healthy Lifestyle Survey, including an activity for all participants.
25. Reference was made to other outcomes and feedback from the day, which was extremely positive. Members were informed of the intention to hold the conference on a biennial basis (subject to availability), which Members support.

Work Programme

26. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2024/25 and possible review topics. The work programme is a rolling programme and items can be added as necessary.

Councillor Mary Layton
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee