

COUNCIL
15 MAY 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. We have received confirmation from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on the 5 May 2025 that the final report will likely be published within the next three weeks, and we will be updated once they have a publication date.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

3. The new risk assessment has embedded alongside development in governance and oversight. The change in approach within Occupational Therapy (OT) interventions; 'High Support High Challenge' has been positively accepted across the OT Team. We received additional Better Care Fund (BCF) grant monies of £175k in February which has enabled ASC to continue approving the highest risk individuals and families throughout the financial year. Moving into a new grant period, we are confident with the process and considerations that are in place to meet the outcomes of those of highest needs.
4. We currently have 58 people awaiting a DFG all risk and impact assessed. 23 properties are currently undergoing work with contractors on site or planned to be on site for small works such as ramps, level access showers and stair lifts. We have 6 properties approved for major works (extensions to support ground floor living and access) awaiting contractor availability.

Bed Lever and rails Risk Assessment

5. Adult Social Care (ASC) had over 400 historic bed lever and rail equipment prescribed orders to support people in our community. Following a medical alert and Health & Safety (H&S) Executive requirements, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) tasked LAs to develop a system for risk assessments.
6. ASC now have a risk assessment built into our client data base system and any new prescribed bed lever/rail equipment is risk assessed at the point of delivery, and if ongoing risks are identified there are regular reviews. ASC currently have 21 bed lever and rail risk assessments outstanding, and these have been individuals we have struggled to contact; they may have moved home, deceased etc. We have linked with our partner agencies to explore all information sources and continue to achieve contact or conclusion.

OT Technician

7. ASC have moved to a formal arrangement with Stockton Home Improvement Agency with a 3-year contract from 1 April 2025 supporting minor works.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

8. DoLS referrals have slightly increased. Agency Best Interest Assessors (BIA's) have reduced and x10 in house BIAs are now being allocated assessments alongside agency BIAs. BIA training is planned for April 2025 to enable additional BIA's to be trained this includes x4 Social Workers and x2 Occupational Therapists (OT's).

Safeguarding (SG)

9. The numbers of safeguarding concerns received have increased alongside complexity. The main themes of concerns are self-neglect within the working age demographic and acts of omission from care homes. We continue to respond 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. Two care homes remain in our Executive Strategy procedures. ASC work closely with our internal and system partners to support the provider make required improvements against the action plan. Lifted suspension is in place for one care home whilst monitoring of improvements are undertaken whilst another is currently suspended from accepting new admissions.

Adult Social Care Teams

11. **Hospital Discharges** - Referrals remain high, and complexity has increased resulting in a higher use of intermediate care beds and short break stays following discharge. This remains under constant review.
12. **People awaiting allocation** - Any referrals awaiting allocation continue to be closely risk assessed and reviewed. All people waiting for allocation have had a detailed contact assessment and have been signposted and provided with appropriate advice and information. All are low risk and have three-monthly contact to ensure needs have not changed.

Commissioning and Contracts

13. The Government announced that the rate of employers' national insurance contributions will increase by 1.2% from 13.8% to 15% from April 2025. Further, that the level at which employers start paying national insurance contributions will also reduce from £9,100 to £5,000 per year. Following a review of the impact of these changes on Darlington's care market, the Council agreed to increase the staffing element (i.e. increase in payroll costs) by 1.2%. The increase will apply to those care providers on the Council's Adults residential and Home Care and Support frameworks.
14. A review of Working Age Adults Residential contract arrangements has been successfully completed. This involved contract negotiations with local providers that care for young

adults who require the most complex care and support services. Typically, the care will involve people with complex learning disability needs and enduring mental health care requirements. The review consisted of new specifications that strengthened outcome-based and person-centred care arrangements, a revised fee formula and greater clarity with regard to situations where care needs may increase during the care arrangements.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

15. The first meeting of the Lead Safeguarding Partners took place on 17 March 2025. Partners discussed the agreed changes which will become effective from 1 April 2025 and the Executive Director of People will undertake the Chair for the coming year. The main change is the introduction of a Management Group represented by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners which will become the decision-making group reporting into the Lead Safeguarding Partners. This group met for the first time on 10 March 2025 and the Assistant Director Children's Services will Chair this group for the coming year. The Terms of Reference and governance for all Groups will be reviewed in light of these changes to ensure they are explicit about the role and responsibility of each group at each level of the partnership and membership is to be reflected accordingly.
16. Other changes include a revision to the current Independent Chair/Scrutineer role held by Ann Baxter. This will become an Independent Scrutineer role only and will focus on quality assurance, audits and organisational scrutiny. Ann has made the decision to step down and Partners thanked her for her valuable contribution to safeguarding over the past ten years, her leadership has been greatly appreciated, and she will be very much missed by all in Darlington.

Councillor Anne-Marie Curry
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults