

COUNCIL
17 JULY 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

Outcome of the Inspection of the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

2. The Local Authority (LA) received GOOD overall with a rating of 73%.
3. The report summary identified:
 - (a) That Darlington provided a good level of Adult Social Care (ASC) service and support. There was a consistent strength-based assessment programme with flexible approaches from staff as well as supportive management around support planning.
 - (b) Risk prioritisation was evident across all assessments, and CQC did not see evidence of a negative impact of waiting. There were no delays to hospital discharge and the data around reablement and outcomes following discharge were better than average.
 - (c) Identified carers stated they received a good level of support and national data was positive.
 - (d) We had a 'Making Every Contact Count' approach, with effective community support and we had clear plans to further embed public health approaches to address health inequalities. There was good partnership working in the discharge of the better care fund and work had been done to address gaps in the care market. There was also a good quality assurance support and additional funding had been provided to support the home care market.
 - (e) Collaborative working with partners was evident, particularly in relation to hospital discharge and the interface they had with social work teams. Section 75 agreements worked well with co-location and multidisciplinary team working embedded. Academic work undertaken with the university was brought back by social workers into practice. We commissioned the voluntary community and social enterprise sector to provide services to support people in the community and there were market engagement sessions which fostered a positive relationship with providers. There was mostly positive feedback about transitions to adult services.
 - (f) Safeguarding arrangements were effective and proportionate to the size of the LA and involved shared arrangements with the children's safeguarding board. There

was a good performance on deprivation of liberties assessments and good oversight of decision making.

- (g) Open and transparent relationships with senior leaders and staff felt they had the ability to challenge and influence policies and practice. Leaders had an impact on staff retention, and there is a positive workplace culture. A key feature of the work of leaders in recent years, had been to embed practice and validation forums. These effectively supported staff learning. The LA demonstrated a commitment to continuous learning related to cultural needs and commissioned external training.
4. This is a significant achievement for the LA and testament to the hard work, commitment and dedication of the adult service teams and wider colleagues who have worked tirelessly to achieve this outcome.
 5. The score of 73% has placed the LA as one of the highest rated adult services in the country and the second highest in the North East. This is an amazing success for a small LA.

Adult Social Care Teams

Bed Lever and rails Risk Assessment

6. ASC have now completed the risk assessments for the historic (420) equipment prescriptions, being the first LA in the region to conclude this work.

Blue Badges

7. We currently have 104 people waiting for a blue badge Occupational Therapy assessment and plans are in place to further reduce these waits. There is a newly embedded operational model to support more efficient applications.

Safeguarding (SG)

8. The numbers of safeguarding concerns received have increased alongside complexity. In 2023/2025 2,832 SG referrals were received, an additional 566 to the previous year equating to 24.98% increase.
9. Self-neglect and acts of omission remain the highest proportion of safeguarding referrals.
10. One care home remains in our Executive Strategy procedures. ASC continue to work closely with our internal and system partners to support the providers make required improvements against the action plan. Lifted suspension is in place for the care home whilst monitoring improvements and actions.
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.

People remaining at home 91 days post discharge

12. At the end of March 2025, 87.1% of people discharged from hospital are still living at home 91 days post hospital discharge this is consistent to previous years, and we remain in a strong position regionally with low numbers experiencing re admission to hospital.

People awaiting allocation for further assessment

13. People awaiting allocation for further assessment 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 assessed as low risk.

Commissioning and Contracts

14. Carers Week took place from 9 June 2025 – 15 June 2025, with partners hosting a range of events across the Borough, including in the Town Hall, GP surgeries, schools, Darlington Memorial Hospital and West Park. The purpose of the events was to recognise and celebrate the incredible contribution of unpaid carers in our communities and to enable more people to identify themselves as carers. In addition, the events aimed to ensure carers were aware of what support they could access which would enable them to carry out their caring role while minimising the impact on their health, wellbeing, work and other personal commitments.
15. The new Home Care and Support Framework which became operational on 3 February 2025 included an innovative element called “Shared Lives”. This is a community-based adults support services which is akin to children’s fostering arrangements. People with eligible care and support needs (typically people with learning disabilities) will live in a family environment and share all aspects of family life with the aim of supporting them to live as independently as possible. Commissioning officers are working with adult’s operational colleagues and the new “Shared Lives” provider to develop a programme of work including establishing a matching process for carer families and eligible individuals.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

16. The new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership arrangements became effective on 1 April 2025 with James Stroyan, Executive Director of People, stepping in as Partnership Chair for the coming year. In light of these new arrangements, the partnership will be reviewing its terms of reference and governance to ensure all groups are explicit about their roles and responsibilities. The partnership is currently in the process of appointing an Independent Scrutineer who will focus on quality assurance and organisational scrutiny and help to strengthen the multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements.
17. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership Group met on 2 April 2025, the agenda covered the new multi-agency Safeguarding Partnership arrangements, the findings of the Child J Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review and a focus on the strategic approach to Suicide Prevention in Darlington, considering its current position and consider how partner agencies may contribute to this collaborative work. The Partnership bid a fond farewell to Ann Baxter, Independent Chair/Scrutineer who has provided an invaluable contribution to the Partnership over a significant period of time.

Councillor Anne-Marie Curry
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults