

COUNCIL
17 JULY 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.

Waiting Lists for NHS Services

2. We received a presentation from the Deputy Director of Planning and Performance, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, updating Members on the waiting lists for NHS Services for County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust (CDDFT) in relation to planned care and cancer.
3. Members were pleased to note that the overall waiting list have progressively reduced over the last 12 months and are below planned levels and that the proportion of patients on the waiting list who have been waiting for less than 18 weeks has been relatively stable over the last 12 months, with signs of improvement from July 2024.
4. The presentation provided details of long waiting patients, with Members noting that CDDFT had zero reported 78+ week wait and 104+ week wait patients. It was also reported that the number of 52+ week wait has progressively reduced from August 2024 through to December 2024, however has increased slightly towards March 2025 and that a low number of 65+ week wait remained until December 2024 which was now showing as zero for March 2025.
5. The presentation provided a breakdown for each speciality, with Members noting that Trauma and Orthopaedic, General Surgery, Gynaecology and Other – Paediatric makes up 50 per cent of the overall waiting list and details were provided for the composition of outpatient attendances.
6. We were informed that diagnostic performance has been progressively improving over the last 12 months and is well below the North East and North Cumbria average position and in relation to Cancer services, CDDFT has consistently performed better than the North East and North Cumbria average position. Members noted that planned developments and improvements for cancer services in 2025/26 are being supported by the Northern Cancer Alliance.
7. Members sought an update on Breast Services and were informed that a managed clinical network across the North East and North Cumbria, facilitated by the Northern Cancer Alliance has been working on an improved clinical modelling for breast services, and an emerging clinical model has been identified which required agreement with providers. Members were advised that stakeholder engagement will be undertaken and that a further update can be provided to Members.

8. We also discussed right place first time and whether delays to treatment can be linked to accessibility issues. Members were reminded that not all hospitals provide the same service so there may be an expectation for patients to have to travel however patient choice exists in relation to accessing services.
9. Members requested further details of waiting times for speciality services within diagnostics and further discussion ensued regarding the fluctuations within diagnostic activity over the last 12 months and the potential impact of cuts to the Integrated Care Board on meeting targets.

Housing Services Fire Safety Policy for purpose-built blocks of flats, Sheltered and Extra Care Accommodation 2025-2030

10. We received a report on the draft Housing Services Fire Safety Policy for purpose-built blocks of flats, Sheltered and Extra Care Accommodation 2025-2030 prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 8 July 2025.
11. The policy sets out how the Council will provide staff, residents, visitors and partner organisations with clear guidelines as to how to prevent fires and actions to take in the event of a fire to protect themselves and others.
12. We noted the consultation undertaken with the Tenants Panel and that the Panel are in support of the proposed policy.
13. We sought clarification regarding the Council's responsibility for the storage of flammable materials and equipment by residents and advised that the tenancy agreements detailed what could and could not be stored, outlined tenants' responsibility in relation to allowing access to their property and that enforcement action can be taken by the Council.
14. Members were informed that any hoarding issues could be identified through a range of Council activities including day to day repairs, tenancy audit visits and gas safety checks; and in relation to hoarding, all housing staff received basic awareness training and staff worked closely with tenants and other services for any breaches in contract.
15. We discussed smoke detectors, noting that all new tenants receive fire safety checks and all properties have hard wired smoke detectors; and following a question regarding the move towards a 'stay put' evacuation policy Members were informed of the work being undertaken to introduce this for purpose built blocks of flats; this policy is already in place for sheltered and extra care accommodation.
16. This Scrutiny Committee supports the onward submission of the draft Housing Services Fire Safety Policy for purpose-built blocks of flats, Sheltered and Extra Care Accommodation 2025-2030 to Cabinet for approval.

Quality Accounts

17. Scrutiny considered the draft Quality Accounts 2024/25 of County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust and Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust and have provided commentary for inclusion in the final Quality Accounts.

Work Programme

18. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2025/26 and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.
19. We have agreed that items be included on Integrated Care Board and expected changes, Physical Activity Strategy, Healthcare associated infections and the Homes Strategy. The work programme will be updated accordingly.

Councillor Neil Johnson
Chair of the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee