

ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
26 AUGUST 2025

ADULT SOCIAL CARE – OUT OF AREA PLACEMENTS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of current Out of Area (OOA) placements in residential, nursing or respite care (Short Break Stays) and Day Opportunities and the reasons these placements have been made.

Summary

2. ADASS (Association for Directors of Adult Social Services) defines the term “Out of Area” as relates to an *“individual’s care and support needs being delivered in a local authority area that is different from the local authority with the statutory responsibility for the provision of that care and support”*. Currently, there are 64 individuals placed outside Darlington Borough including residential, nursing or respite care. 44% of the out of area placements are placed within 0-20 miles of Darlington Borough’s boundary and a further 40% between 0-50 miles of the boundary. There are a range of reasons for adult services securing placements out of area which include the transfer of responsibility to Darlington following an “Ordinary Residence” determination, individuals and families exercising their right of choice to be near support networks, Ministry of Justice decision, historic placements when Darlington was part of Durham County Council’s jurisdiction and placement breakdown and there is no available local providers due to the specialist/challenging care needs.
3. In addition, there are 22 individuals who access day services out of borough (although they permanently reside in Darlington) at a cost of £402,814.03 for the 24/25 financial year. The reasons for these placements are the complexity of the individual’s needs including those transitioning from children to adult’s services.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that Members: -
 - (a) Consider Darlington Borough Council’s current Out of Area placement arrangements.
 - (b) Note the key areas for development.

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Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Sukhdev Dosanjh:5651

Council Plan	This work contributes to the priorities agreed in the Council Plan.
Addressing inequalities	There are no implications arising from this report.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no implications arising from this report.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Key aims with Adult Services is to deliver efficient, effective and person-centred care which supports a strength-based approach aligned to the requirements of the Care Act and includes effective use of resources.
Health and Wellbeing	This work supports the priorities set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications arising from this report.
Wards Affected	All wards.
Groups Affected	All groups.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not impact on the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Profile of the Out of Area Placements

- On 27 May 2025, there were 64 individuals placed outside Darlington Borough in either Residential, Nursing or Respite care (Short Break Stays). This is comprised of 38 individuals in residential care, 21 individuals in nursing care: five individuals in respite care. There are currently nine placements outside of the north-east, with Plymouth being the furthest away.
- Of the remaining 55, 17 have been placed within the Tees Valley and 39 elsewhere in the Northeast of England. The longest out of area placement has been 25 years (2003). The average age of those in out of area placements is 64 years old. The youngest being 20 and the oldest being 98.

Expenditure

- The cost of OOA residential, nursing and respite care placements are approximately £3.5M and represent 13% of the total spend on residential care placements by the Council.

Rationale for Placements

8. There are a range of reasons which has led to out of area placements to be made. These include: Ordinary Residence (Section 117 Mental Health Act, 1983) transfer of responsibility to Darlington, individuals and families exercise of choice to be near support networks, Ministry of Justice decision, historic placements when Darlington was part of Durham County Council's jurisdiction and placement breakdown and there are no available local providers due to the specialist/challenging care needs.

Notification of placements

9. The Association of Directors for Adult Services (ADASS) has developed a protocol for "Out of Area" placements particularly emphasising the need for quality assurance and safeguarding oversight. The Council, in accordance with this protocol, notifies all host authorities when individuals are placed in their area.

Key areas for Development

10. A programme of work will be undertaken to review all out of area placements to ensure that as many services as possible are provided within the Borough. Of particular importance are Day Opportunities where a programme of work is underway to determine the inter-relationship between the role the Council's in-house services and that of commissioned day service provision. An options appraisal will be developed to help determine the future model of day services including any out of area day service provision.
11. Development opportunities are also underway across SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Education providers, Skills for Life, health, Commissioning and Adult Social Services to develop a local personalised learning college in Darlington for September 2026. Proposals are in their infancy and will require approval. In developing a provision locally, it is hoped that opportunities for next steps can be explored to align with education endings to transition to community-based support within people's own communities to reduce the need for expensive out of area day provision when Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) end.

Outcome of Consultation

12. The Older Person Residential Framework Agreement was agreed in April 2024 following a consultation exercise with local care providers. The Council also commissioned Health watch Darlington to seek the views of people receiving Day Opportunities.