

**COUNCIL**  
**2 OCTOBER 2025**

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**OVERVIEW OF ADULTS PORTFOLIO**

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**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**

**Blue Badges**

2. We have experienced an improved position with Blue Badges currently having 60 people waiting for a Blue Badge Occupational Therapy assessment with the longest wait being 50 days at the time of writing this report.

**Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)**

3. A recent external audit, to evaluate how well the council meets best practice standards in managing DFG, was completed. The audit found that some of our areas of our practice are delivered to a high standard and are 'exemplary'. Overall, the audit praised Darlington's approach in managing the grant alongside prioritisation of risk and impact to enable the grant to align to those most in need.
4. Bimonthly meetings continue to monitor governance arrangements for the application of DFG grants as well as monitoring those waiting for DFG referrals following Occupational Therapy recommendations.

**Hospital Discharges**

5. These have increased year on year alongside complexity, resulting in a higher use of intermediate care beds whilst achieving a reduction in short break stay beds and supporting the majority of discharges home with reablement.

**Direct Payments (DP)**

6. We have seen a small reduction in people using Direct Payments to meet eligible needs. We currently have 246 DP's which equates to 1.3% reduction. DP governance meetings are held quarterly to identify end reason and explore practice, system and process improvements. The practice guidance is currently under review and process maps are under development to aid Practitioners.

**Safeguarding (SG)**

7. The numbers of safeguarding concerns received during Quarter 1 have slightly reduced, however the number of Safeguarding's progressing to enquiry have increased. This

increase in progression to enquiry is likely due to raised awareness with care providers following the introduction of a new Decision Support tool (a mechanism for providers to check if the incident meets safeguarding concern thresholds) and Risk Notification process (this is a reporting tool for providers on low level incidents).

8. Self-neglect and acts of omission remain the highest proportion of safeguarding referrals both locally and regionally.
9. Two care homes are within our Executive Strategy procedures. Adult Social Care 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 one care home with phased admissions whilst monitoring improvements and actions.

### **Commissioning and Contracts**

10. The Council, in partnership with the Integrated Care Board, is re-tendering its statutory Consolidated Advocacy provision in the Autumn with new commissioned arrangements expected to come into effect from 1 April 2026. There are a range of services included in the re-tendering exercise such as Care act (2014) advocacy, Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) and Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA). Advocacy helps to ensure that people's voices, wishes and preferences are heard. Further, that their rights are upheld particularly when they have difficulty in speaking for themselves. An advocate plays a critical role in care management arrangements helping to protect human rights and playing an essential role in safeguarding.
11. Commissioning is working with Adult Services colleagues to review Darlington's Day Opportunities. These services provide a variety of different activities (e.g. life skills training, arts and craft etc) and support people with a range of diverse eligible needs such as autism, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health and older adults. Day opportunities can be provided in designated buildings or in community settings. The scope of the review includes commissioned arrangements as well as the Council's in-house provision. The objective of the review is to consider how the Council can continue to meet assessed eligible need for day opportunities using a strength-based approach that maximises the resources available, promotes independence and inclusion and delivers improved outcomes for people using the services.

### **Darlington Safeguarding Partnership**

12. The Management Group is a newly established decision-making group made up of the Delegated Safeguarding Partners. It has oversight of child and adult strategic and operational activities, and they met on 23 June 2025. The focus of the agenda was roles and responsibilities of the partnership's subgroups in line with new safeguarding partnership arrangements. It was agreed, whilst the new arrangements are now in place, further discussion is required to consider what is needed in respect of governance and accountability to ensure the groups are clear on their roles and responsibilities. Chairs of the subgroups provided an overview of activity, summarising what they have achieved or is ongoing along with any issues or areas of concern.
13. The Lead Safeguarding Partners Strategic Group met on 7 July 2025 and agreed its Terms of Reference. Lead Partners are aware of the work ongoing through the Management Group

on the roles and responsibilities of subgroups. Partners were provided an overview of activity from the Management Group and Subgroups and the current position of the Integrated Care Board Reforms.

**Councillor Anne-Marie Curry**  
**Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Adults**