

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

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**OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Adults Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

**CQC Assurance Framework Update**

2. The Assistant Director, Adult Social Care (ASC) presented a report to update and inform Members on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance framework and inspection activity.
3. The Assistant Director, ASC, first outlined the CQC's inspection process, before presenting the final result received on 30 May 2025, an overall score of 73%, with an official 'GOOD' score.
4. The Assistant Director, ASC, informed the Committee that the 73% score places the Council as one of the highest rated adult services in the country, a 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 Assistant Director, ASC referred to the nine different quality statements by which the Council was assessed. The Council received 'good' in eight of the nine quality statements, with a Requires Improvement for Equity in Experience and Outcomes.
6. We posed questions regarding the area which required improvement, specifically regarding whether this was something the team was expecting. The Assistant Director, ASC, affirmed to Members that the score was close to 'Good', but are actively trying to improve this.
7. We concluded this area of discussion by congratulating the Adult Services team for their ongoing hard work, ability to respond to feedback, and fantastic result.

**Assessment of Services Commissioned from Out of Area**

8. The Head of Commissioning and Contracts introduced a report which provided the Committee with an overview of current Out of Area (OOA) placements in residential, nursing or respite care. I previously requested that this report also included reference to Day Opportunities following my CQC interview.
9. The Head of Commissioning and Contracts provided the Committee with the Association for Directors of Adult Social Services' definition of "Out of Area", and reminded us that

whilst such placements are OOA, 44% of these placements are within 0-20 miles of Darlington's Boundary, reinforcing Adult Services' ability to monitor individuals placed OOA.

10. The Head of Commissioning and Contracts went on to inform us of the reasons for which the Council would secure placements OOA and provided an in-depth breakdown of what type of OOA establishments the Council utilises. The Head of Commissioning and Contracts also outlined the demographical context for those receiving care OOA.
11. The Head of Commissioning and Contracts informed us of Key areas for Development. Such areas included Day Opportunities, SEND Educational Providers, Skills for Life, health and Commissioning. It was also stated that Adult Services working alongside Beaumont College and Education colleagues are exploring the development of a local personalised learning pathway in Darlington for September 2026.
12. We then posed questions regarding how Adult services ensure that Darlington residents placed OOA do not disrupt neighbouring local communities. Both The Head of Commissioning and Contracts and the Assistant Director, Adult Services, responded stating that the standard practice is to communicate with the Local Authorities that recipients placed OOA are placed within, and receive continuous oversight over their care.

#### **Performance Indicators End of Year 2024/2025**

13. The Assistant Director, ASC, presented a report which provided Members with performance data against key performance indicators (KPI) for 2024/2025.
14. The report referred to the performance of 10 of the 12 indicators reported at the end of the year 2024/2025.
15. The Assistant Director, ASC, provided commentary over the figures, and informed the us that the service area is currently facing significant demand as a result of people being discharged from hospital. We were informed that the aim going forward is to continue to support a reablement approach for individuals to receive care from their homes.
16. We posed questions on the KPI's that weren't performing as well as last year, specifically on Self Directed Support. The Assistant Director, ASC, responded that the team have reviewed the direct payment procedure to ensure transparency with recipients over what the service is. The procedure has been adjusted to be easy to understand and apply. Additionally, it has become essential for all social workers to offer this as an option within the support planning process.

#### **Work Programme 2024/25**

17. The Democratic Officer spoke to this report and invited us and the Officers into discussion over rescheduling items as a result of a previous item being deferred. As a result, we

agreed to move the Domestic Abuse Strategy from the January Meeting to the October date, in order to allow the Medium-Term Financial Plan item to receive sufficient time to be scrutinised in January.

**Supplementary Items which in the Opinion of the Chair of this Committee are of an Urgent Nature and were Discussed at the Meeting.**

18. Following my request during the Chair and Vice-Chair's pre-briefing with Officers, the Assistant Director, ASC, delivered an informal update on the Blue Badge Process as a result of its inclusion in the Forward Plan.
19. The Assistant Director, ASC, outlined the Government criteria for Blue Badges and how the team have incorporated this. Additionally, The Assistant Director, ASC, detailed the new procedures the team have adopted to meet the high demand, and informed us of the results in cutting wait times from 16 weeks to 5. We thanked the Assistant Director, ASC, for the team's efforts and commented on the relief felt amongst residents as a result.

**Councillor Andrew Anderson**  
**Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee**