

COUNCIL
26 March 2026

OVERVIEW OF ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership – Annual Report 2024/25

2. The Committee received the Annual Report of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP), outlining the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements across 2024/25. Members noted the continued focus on strengthening practice models and ensuring safeguarding arrangements remain responsive to the needs of children, young people, and adults with care and support needs.
3. The Partnership has undertaken significant work to revise leadership and governance arrangements, including the creation of a new Management Group responsible for assurance and oversight across both children's and adults' services. Key themes highlighted to Members included the Partnership's emphasis on prevention and early intervention, statutory requirements relating to children which inform approaches to adults, and the increasing challenges associated with self-neglect and hoarding.
4. Members discussed Child Exploitation training delivered with Barnardo's, the availability of local self-neglect data, and the mechanisms in place to support Gypsy Roma communities in reporting safeguarding concerns. The Committee also noted that 78.7% of people receiving social care reported feeling safe (Q3), the second highest return regionally and third highest nationally.
5. Scrutiny also noted and wished to congratulate Amanda Hugill on her retirement following 40 years with the Local Authority and thanked her for her work with scrutiny in her most recent post within the Safeguarding Team.

Care Homes in Executive Strategy Measures

6. The Committee received an overview of the Local Authority's responsibilities under the Care Act 2014 in relation to organisational safeguarding and considered the current position of care homes subject to Executive Strategy Procedures (ESP).
7. Members noted that ESP is a formal multi-agency process used where a provider's practice or governance raises serious safeguarding concerns. The Committee was informed of the updated DSP procedure, which strengthens joint working, information-sharing and action planning. Two care homes in Darlington are currently subject to ESP due to concerns including medication errors, management oversight, safeguarding reporting, and staffing levels.

8. The Committee received assurance that both homes are subject to sustained oversight through multi-agency meetings, monitoring of action plans, quality assurance visits, medication optimisation, governance reviews, and checks on safeguarding practice and recruitment. Members raised questions about the challenges of monitoring multiple providers and the level of support available to them.

Performance Indicators – Quarter 2 2025/26

9. The Committee reviewed performance against key Adult Social Care indicators for Quarter 2. Of the twelve indicators monitored by the Committee, eight had data available at Q2.
10. Members noted improved performance in admissions to long-term residential and nursing care for both older people (ASC002) and adults aged 18–64 (ASC003). Performance remained stable for indicators relating to reablement outcomes and the uptake of self-directed support (ASC019, ASC049, ASC050), with no indicators performing worse than the same period in 2024/25.
11. Three safeguarding-related indicators (ASC208, ASC209, ASC211) were noted as point-in-time measures and therefore not directly comparable year-on-year. Two information-access indicators (ASC054, ASC055) are collected annually, with updated figures to be reported at year-end. Members were advised that national changes to ASCOF and data requirements mean that indicators relating to adults with learning disabilities (ASC045, ASC046) are no longer reportable and replacements are in development.
12. Access to information has improved significantly, with 82% of people reporting that information is easy to find, following enhancements to the web page and call-handling arrangements. Members queried the broader contextual pressures affecting performance, including housing need, and discussed ways to improve residents' understanding of Adult Social Care, including through ward newsletters.

Work Programme 2025/26

13. The Committee reviewed its work programme and noted that the Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) report is scheduled for the next meeting on 14 April 2026. No additional changes were requested.

Councillor Andrew Anderson
Chair of Adults Scrutiny Committee