
OVERVIEW OF ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Performance Indicators Quarter 1 2018/19

2. Members received an update on performance against those key performance indicators for 2018/19 at Quarter 1. We examined ten Adults Social Care Indicators and all six of the Housing Services indicators.

Welfare Reforms and Universal Credit

3. Scrutiny received an update report following the roll-out of Universal Credit in Darlington in November 2015.
4. Universal Credit is replacing a number of existing means tested benefits for working age people, including Housing Benefit administered by the Council and the full roll-out commenced on 20 June 2018. Most working people making a new claim to benefit or reporting a significant change in their circumstances will now claim Universal Credit.
5. We were pleased to hear that implementation of Universal Credit has been successful in Darlington and we would like to acknowledge the hard work of all staff putting in place support for residents.
6. Members have also agreed to carry out a task and finish review to gauge the initial impact of the roll out of Universal Credit in Darlington in consultation with the Assistant Director, Adults and Housing. We will be carrying out a scoping exercise very shortly and hope to engage with organisations, Councillors and residents in looking at impacts.

Better Care Fund

7. Members received an update on the delivery of the 2017-2019 Better Care Fund and the updated guidance received in July 2018 in respect of the second year of the plan.
8. There are seven broad workstreams of the plan to support the delivery of the Better Care Fund in the priority areas and additional grant funding to Adult Social Care will be used to offset expenditure on current pressures and demand to ensure sustainability while the service undergoes transformation

9. We also received a summary of the 2017/18 Quarter 4 (year-end) monitoring requirements to ensure that Darlington complies with the national conditions attached to the Better Care Fund.

Support to Carers

10. The Darlington Carers Support contract has now been in place since 1 May 2017 offering a range of support and is performing well with 850 carers on the register in support of the service.
11. The National Carers Action Plan 2018-20, published on 5 June 2018, sets out the cross-government programme of work to support carers over the next two years. We are well placed to develop a response to the newly published Action Plan which will build on and expand work that was already in progress. Darlington's response will be co-produced and carer's views will be sought during the process.

Advocacy Services

12. The authority is under a statutory duty to provide independent advocacy services for people with adult social care needs who need care and support and a new contract for the provision of these statutory services within Darlington was awarded to Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) on 1 April 2018.
13. We received a report which outlined the Council's duty under the Care Act 2014; the new arrangements with DAD and monitoring information provided by DAD in respect of advocacy activities in the contract April to June 2018; along with the Advocacy Charter and the Code of Practice that DAD adheres to.
14. In this last quarter, DAD responded to 89 per cent of all cases within 3 days of a request for a service under the contract and it has been recognised by both the Council and DAD that this is a new contractual arrangement and that further improvements to advocacy arrangements will continue to be explored.

Councillor Marjory Knowles
Chair of Adults and Housing Scrutiny Committee