

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a meeting of **Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 16 January 2023 at 9.30 am**

### **Present**

**Councillor P Jopling (Chair)**

### **Members of the Committee**

Councillors K Earley, J Higgins, L A Holmes, C Martin, S Quinn, K Robson, M Simmons, B Kellett and C Varty

### **Co-opted Members**

Ms A Stobbart

## **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors V Andrews, C Bell, I Cochrane, R Crute, O Gunn, J Howey, C Kay, A Savory, and T Stubbs.

Apologies for absence were also received from Co-opted Member R Gott and from Project Lead G McGee, Healthwatch County Durham.

## **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor B Kellett was present as substitute for Councillor R Crute and Councillor C Varty was present as substitute for Councillor O Gunn.

## **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **Matters Arising**

S Gwilym, Principal Scrutiny Officer advised that further to the item on the previous agenda regarding Winter Planning 2022/23, delivered by S Jacques, Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust, Councillor Quinn had sent an e-mail requesting reassurance around pressures experienced by the NHS and the Trust over the Christmas period following recent media coverage. M

Laing, Director of Integrated Community Services agreed to respond to the questions raised by Councillor Quinn.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **5 Any Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties**

There were no items from co-opted members or interested parties.

#### **6 Proposed Oral Health Promotion Strategy County Durham**

The Committee received a report which informed Members of the feedback following the consultation process and provided an opportunity for final comments on the draft strategy 2023- 2028 before progressing to Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) in March 2023. Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited for this item (for copy see file of minutes).

A Healy, Director of Public Health clarified that the Local Authority were responsible for oral health promotion and the NHS were responsible for dental health care. She explained that the previous oral health strategy was in place from 2016-2019 and that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had halted implementation of a new Oral Health Strategy until now. She stressed that oral health was a priority and looked forward to gathering more comments from Members regarding the draft strategy.

M Baldwin, Public Health Strategic Manager DCC Starting Well provided a detailed presentation which highlighted that in County Durham, 1 in 4 five-year-olds had experienced tooth decay, and that vulnerable groups were at a higher risk of poor oral health. She explained the plan to improve oral health within the County and noted the key actions for children, adults, and the vulnerable groups. It was also noted that the Health and Care Act 2022 had moved the responsibilities for initiating and varying schemes for water fluoridation from local authorities to the Secretary of State.

Councillor Quinn advised that for some people brushing their teeth was not a priority and buying toothpaste was an added expense. She believed that fluoridation in water was beneficial and helped prevent tooth decay. She commended the oral health champions in nursing homes noting that they were a generation that was often forgotten and that issues with their teeth contributed to problems with eating and weight loss. Councillor Quinn gave an example of a retired person who for health reasons had not attended his registered practice for dental check-ups for a few years and had subsequently been removed from the register as an NHS patient. The practice advised that they were unable to re-

register the patient as no money was being received from Government. Councillor Quinn also expressed concern regarding younger adults who had not had the opportunity to register for NHS dentistry and felt that their oral health had the potential to deteriorate as a result. Councillor Quinn noted that the work referenced in the strategy was great, however as there was a significant number of people who had been lost by the system, she asked if there was anything further that could be suggested or asked nationally to address the outstanding issues.

The Public Health Strategic Manager advised that the Local Authority were working with schools and residential care homes and across the board to promote and encourage good oral health. She clarified that the responsibility for dental care was not within the remit of the Local Authority and asked if colleagues within the NHS were able to provide Councillor Quinn with further information.

The Director of Public Health noted that there was great support for water fluoridation and confirmed that it did increase dental health. She advised that in a previous letter from the Secretary of State, they confirmed that the system in County Durham was ready for fluoridation but explained that a public consultation would need to take place before it could be introduced. The Director of Public Health confirmed that water fluoridation was a priority and thus retained within the oral health promotion strategy. She assured Members that she would continue to engage with Government regarding water fluoridation and report on the progress of this.

In response to the question raised by Councillor Quinn regarding funding for practices, P Fletcher, Senior Primary Care Manager (Primary Care Dental Commissioning Lead – North East and North Cumbria), NHS England North East and Yorkshire, acknowledged the challenges with access to NHS dentistry and explained that there was a backlog following the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to issues regarding workforce recruitment and retention. She clarified that unlike general medical services, there was no formal registration for dentistry and that the capacity to deliver services at individual practices was dependant on the workforce of the practice. The Senior Primary Care Manager noted that recruitment and retention of staff was the main concern locally, rather than concerns with funding. She advised that locally, additional funding had been provided to practices who were able to deliver more services and explained that this had addressed some of the issues relating to urgent care. She also advised that Durham was a target for the Golden Hello Scheme which provided financial incentives to bring dentists into the area. The Senior Primary Care Manager explained that sadly there was no immediate solution to dental access, and that the focus was on urgent care, and those that had a dental need, but explained that prevention of poor oral health was key. She advised that there was also a focus on the recall process explaining that the regularity an individual was seen was dependent on their oral health requirements.

T Robson, Chair of the County Durham Local Dentistry Committee advised that a unique pilot scheme to recruit overseas dentists was currently being developed which would soon recruit twelve dentists and noted that some of these would be appointed to the County Durham area. He explained that Health Education England would provide a comprehensive training package and it was hoped that this would address some of the workforce challenges. He offered to report on the progress of the scheme at a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Quinn welcomed the great work that the NHS and the Local Authority were doing but emphasised that the dentist practice in question who had removed an NHS patient from their register had refused to re-register the patient as they had claimed that no money was coming from Government. She stressed that practice staff must communicate the correct information to the public. With regards to the regularity of recalls, Councillor Quinn was concerned that if patients did not attend for a period of time, there was the potential that they too could be removed from the register.

The Senior Primary Care Manager explained that the focus on recalls was to ensure that the workforce was operating in the most cost-effective way. With regards to funding, she confirmed that this was available and asked Members to feedback any funding related issues to NHS England. The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer offered to obtain the details of the dental practice from Councillor Quinn and share this information with the Senior Primary Care Manager.

Councillor Martin expressed concern regarding the oral health data for young people and vulnerable groups. He welcomed that specific training was being provided for foster parents but noted that there was no intervention for parents of children who suffered from tooth decay. He acknowledged that parents had to manage many responsibilities and because of this, it was difficult for some families to ensure good oral health routines. He asked whether this could be an avenue for intervention.

The Public Health Strategic Manager noted that although increased support was offered to those who were vulnerable, parents and carers were also supported via the school nurse and health visitors who educated parents on how to brush their children's teeth from a young age, increasing their knowledge and awareness regarding good oral health.

The Chair suggested there be a specific champion for schools to check children's teeth. She explained that the champion did not need to be a qualified dentist and that this would be an inexpensive way of identifying children who had any obvious oral health concerns. The Chair stressed that it was vital for children to be educated regarding oral health from a young age. The Public Health Strategic Manager agreed that it was key to educate young children and confirmed that the supervised teeth brushing scheme was actively encouraged.

Councillor Varty advised that in previous years, dental nurses had attended Sure Start buildings and brought along large teeth props to educate children and their parents on good oral health care. She advised that free toothpaste and toothbrushes were offered at the end of the sessions and that positive feedback had been received from the parents who had attended. The Public Health Strategic Manager advised that the large teeth props were still being utilised for educational sessions.

Councillor Robson echoed the comments raised by Councillor Quinn regarding dental practices not registering new patients and hoped that this issue would be clarified. He noted that the Local Authority had done various health promotions over the years and suggested that a new promotion on oral health would be beneficial to enhance awareness. He also suggested that children be provided with samples of toothbrushes and toothpaste to promote and encourage good oral health. He felt that the education system in schools was key and that this could be utilised further by providing a presentation showing images of the results of poor oral health and tooth decay. Further to the Chair's suggestion regarding a school champion for oral health, he suggested that student dentists could be a good source for this role.

The Public Health Strategic Manager advised that providing toothbrushes and toothpaste to children in need was being considered.

Co-opted Member, A Stobbart was aware that there was capacity for NHS patients to register at some dental practices in the County Durham area, such as Murton, and asked if it was possible to make people aware of this. The Public Health Strategic Manager agreed to do some active promotion around this. The Senior Primary Care Manager explained that there was a UK website which indicated whether dental practices had capacity for new NHS patients and advised that a contractual requirement had been introduced for practices to update this website. She advised that people who were unable to book an appointment should contact 101 and would be signposted accordingly.

## **Resolved**

The Committee noted the content of the report and presentation and agreed the comments as the Committee's response to the Oral Health Promotion Strategy.

## **7 Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022**

The Committee received a report which provided Members with an overview of the health and wellbeing of County Durham's population and examples of how the approach to wellbeing was being implemented. Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited for this item (for copy see file of minutes).

The annual report explained that 2022 had been a year of transition moving from responding to COVID-19 to living with COVID-19 as safely as possible. It provided an insight to the health and wellbeing of the residents of County Durham and reflected the work that was being done to support people in living longer, healthier lives. It also included a focus on tobacco and the need to focus the effort on making smoking history in County Durham.

A Healy, Director of Public Health provided a detailed presentation which focussed on the following key areas:

- Health and wellbeing across County Durham
- Living with COVID-19
- Making smoking history
- Priorities (covering Healthier, Fairer, and Protected)
- Update on recommendations from 2021

Councillor Quinn thanked the Director of Public Health and expressed how proud she was to be a Councillor in County Durham noting the great achievements of the service. She believed it would be beneficial for all Members to be informed of activity and progress regarding health and wellbeing in County Durham and asked if regular awareness sessions could be arranged.

The Director of Public Health agreed to contact Councillor Hood, Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services to discuss the best way to engage with Members regarding this.

## **Resolved**

That the content of the report be noted.

## **8 Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2022**

The Committee received a report which outlined the work carried out which had been led and supported by the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) during 2021-22 which had impacted positively on the strategic priorities detailed in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25 (JHWS). Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited for this item (for copy see file of minutes).

J Bradbrook, Partnerships Team Manager and M Laing, Director of Integrated Community Services, County Durham Care Partnership gave a detailed presentation explaining that the vision of the HWB was to 'make County Durham a healthy place where people live well, for longer' and that this would be achieved through three strategic priorities in JHWS:

- Starting well
- Living well
- Ageing well

The Partnerships Team Manager confirmed that this was the seventh Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report, which outlined the key achievements of the Board during its ninth year of operation. The last HWB annual report was produced for 2018/19, there were no reports produced for 2019/20 or 2020/21 due to pressures of the pandemic response. The Director of Integrated Community Services confirmed that from 1 July 2022, County Durham became part of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB).

Considering the change of system to the ICB, Councillor Earley asked if there were any risks in terms of resources and deployment. The Director of Integrated Community Services confirmed that there were risks and that these were being managed the best that they could. He explained that the new ICB was introduced within a short period of six months and covered 13 Local Authority areas and which were all different in operation. He stressed it was vital to continually engage with the ICB to ensure that the Board understand the local dimension as what worked for one area would not necessarily work for another.

The Chair expressed her concern with regards to funding and hoped that the ICB would not only deliver the current level of service but offer the opportunity to improve further. The Director of Integrated Community Services commented that the ICB were being supportive, but that it was important for progression to be aligned with what members wanted and stressed the need for positive advocates.

Councillor Quinn commented how positive it was to see Covid-19 community champions referenced within the report. She was proud to be a Champion herself and hoped that this would continue.

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that the JHWS would be refreshed in 2023 and it was necessary for Adults, Wellbeing and Health (AWH) and Children and Young People's (CYP) Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to feed into the strategy. He advised that the item would be included on the agenda for the meeting of CYP OSC on 26 April 2023 and members of the AWH OSC would be invited to attend this meeting.

Councillor Varty asked if organisations were commissioned to go out to the homes of elderly residents and asked how often the quality of the service provided was checked. Sarah Burns, Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board emphasised that quality assurance was critical and explained that a range of methods had been implemented to assess the service provided. Councillor Varty asked if it was possible to discuss this topic further outside of the meeting. Sarah Burns agreed to do so.

Councillor Higgins emphasised how well the integrated team had worked together and noted the great preventative work. He expressed his thanks to all members of the integrated team in County Durham for the work that they do. The Director of Integrated Community Services confirmed that he would pass on Councillor Higgins thanks to the team.

Co-opted member A Stobbart referred to the information in the report regarding housing and health. She advised that she worked for Believe Housing and that County Durham had 45,000 properties which were social housing properties and noted the challenges with maintaining older properties. She asked for clarification on what the housing and health element of the HWB did and whether more could be done with social housing providers. The Director of Integrated Community Services stressed that housing was vitally important to prevent ill health and to help people recover, and whilst a lot of work was currently being done with housing partners, he believed that there was still more that could be done. Sarah Burns, Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board explained that there was a Housing and Health Group that met quarterly with housing providers in County Durham which considered joint initiatives, and she advised that the Group were aware of the work that was required with private landlords including selective licensing.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Director of Public Health explained that housing was part of the HWB and there was an opportunity for housing to be reinvigorated and that selective licensing would help with this. She noted that fuel poverty and energy costs were a priority and advised that additional funding had been secured for County Durham to tackle housing and homelessness as this was also an area of concern and agreed to share the statistics regarding this.

The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board explained that it was important for all services within the integrated team to make the necessary referrals, for example, ensuring that the energy supply is not switched off for residents who are dependent on energy or medically dependent on equipment.

The Director of Integrated Community Services noted that the County Durham and Care Partnership Forum had housing as their major topic and offered to share the slides from the meeting with Members of the Committee. He advised that in some cases, housing providers were the first service to become aware of a health or safeguarding concern. He confirmed that they were working closely with the ICB to ensure that there was enough resource in County Durham to assure quality.

In terms of safeguarding, Co-opted Member A Stobbart explained that within her line of work, a specific team was created to address the increased number of vulnerable people presenting themselves and that satisfaction surveys were completed with these people and referrals made to the relevant services where necessary.



Councillor Quinn noted that homeowners should not be forgotten, particularly those that were elderly. The Director of Integrated Community Services agreed that this was important and advised that people who were frail were provided with good care when in care homes, but if living in large family houses, did not always receive the correct level of nursing care. He confirmed that the next area of development was to consider care for frail people within their own homes.

## **Resolved**

The Committee noted the work that took place in 2021-22 by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## **9 Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2022**

The Committee received a report which provided Members with the Annual Report for 2021/2022 of the Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership (DSAP), which provided assurance of safeguarding adults activity across County Durham. There was also an accompanying suite of documents including the Annual Report on a Page and Easy Read version (for copy see file of minutes).

The DSAP Annual Report is minded to its vision to support adults at risk of harm to prevent abuse happening and when it does occur, to act swiftly to achieve good outcomes, consulting with the Local Healthwatch as a source of support to inform DSAP activity.

H Gibson, Safeguarding Adults Partnership Business Manager provided a detailed presentation which focussed on the following areas:

- Purpose
- Our vision and partners
- Safeguarding Adult Reviews
- Professional and community engagement
- Strategic plan and priorities
- Quality assurance and the Safeguarding Adults Collection data
- Looking ahead
- Partner assurance

The Chair gave an example of a resident who needed support and asked whether she needed their permission to make a referral to social care direct. The Safeguarding Adults Partnership Business Manager explained that the Data Protection Act supported officers who had genuine concerns regarding the vulnerability of an adult to make a report and an offer of assessment may be given to determine their level of need. She explained however that if the adult did not want to engage with staff, then the support that could be offered would be limited.

With regards to toxic culture, Councillor Earley asked if there were trigger mechanisms in place to identify safeguarding red flags in organisations that offered care, to ensure that these organisations were referred to the appropriate body for investigation. The Safeguarding Adults Partnership Business Manager advised that there was a variety of mechanisms in place to support establishment reporting and further advised that there was an executive strategy process for establishments of significant concern, and the establishment would not be discharged from the process until professionals were satisfied with their progress.

The Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board advised that quality assurance ran parallel to safeguarding. With regards to toxic culture, she explained that she had developed a training package following the investigation by BBC Panorama at Whorlton Hall where it emerged that culture was extremely toxic. The Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board noted that the training package had initially been delivered to inhouse providers but that there were plans for the training package to be shared with the independent sector. She explained that the package encouraged staff to whistle blow or report incidents that they had witnessed and confirmed that the feedback from staff who had received the training had been positive.

## **Resolved**

The Committee noted the content of the report and noted the future work of the Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership.

## **10 Other Business**

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer highlighted that members of the Committee along with all Overview and Scrutiny Committees would have received an invitation to a Climate Emergency Response Plan workshop scheduled for March 2023. He asked members to consider the workshop and to ensure that they respond to the invitation if they have not done so prior.

Councillor Quinn expressed her appreciation for the meeting noting the interesting items of discussion and enjoyable presentations and expressed how proud she was to be a County Councillor in County Durham. The Chair concurred and thanked all officers for their attendance.