

24 September 2024

**Transforming Care, Learning Disability
Commissioning Strategy and Think Autism
Strategy Update**

**Report of Sarah Burns, Joint Head of Integrated Strategic
Commissioning for North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care
Board and Durham County Council**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with an update in relation to local delivery and progress of the Transforming Care Programme, incorporating a brief update on the Joint Health and Social Care Learning Disability Commissioning Strategy (2019-2022) currently being updated, and the Think Autism Strategy for County Durham (2023-2026).

Executive summary

Context

- 2 The legacy impact of the pandemic on the entire Health and Social Care system, not least community care and support services, continues to have an impact into 2024/25. The post Covid 19 landscape in healthcare and social care has been affected by a reduced available workforce and rising costs for current and planned development projects, ultimately impacting on timescales for delivery. Case managers and community teams continue to support people in the community, although several community social care and nursing services are facing noticeable pressures relating to increased anxiety and associated behaviours that challenge. Whilst there have been several successful discharges to the community, the acuity of some patients and the need to ensure that there is a safe and stable community package of care has resulted in the pace and trajectory of inpatient discharges being significantly impacted.

- 3 Nevertheless, the focus to deliver Transforming Care objectives continues to remain strong in County Durham through the local planning mechanisms: Transforming Care Partnerships, Integrated Care Systems (ICS) and Integrated Care Partnerships (ICP) working to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan commitments for learning disability and autism locally and across the North East and North Cumbria (NENC) region.

Reducing the reliance on inpatient provision

- 4 Working as a system, the NHS and Local authority partners are continuing to develop responses to address the over reliance on inpatient care. Delivering the key NHS Long Term Plan ambitions and transforming the way communities are supported, there is a clear goal that by March 2025 no more than 30 adults (with a learning disability and/or who are autistic) per million adults and no more than 12–15 under 18 years (with a learning disability and/or who are autistic) per million under 18s are cared for in an inpatient unit.

Community developments

- 5 Two key accommodation-based developments were under construction in 2023, one of which is now completed. These will form part of the joint health and social care response to increase our housing and support provision in County Durham, alongside supporting people to develop their life skills to promote independence.
- 6 The strategic needs assessment of people with a learning disability and autistic people is constantly under review to enable services to be shaped around current and future demand. Plans for the commissioning of specialist accommodation and support over the next five years are being developed and implemented.

Recommendations

- 7 Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to:
 - a. Note the progress made with plans for new community services for people with the most complex needs including the use of the Community Discharge Grant, which will support the Transforming Care objectives over the next year and in the longer term.
 - b. Receive further regular updates to retain oversight of the Transforming Care agenda.

Background

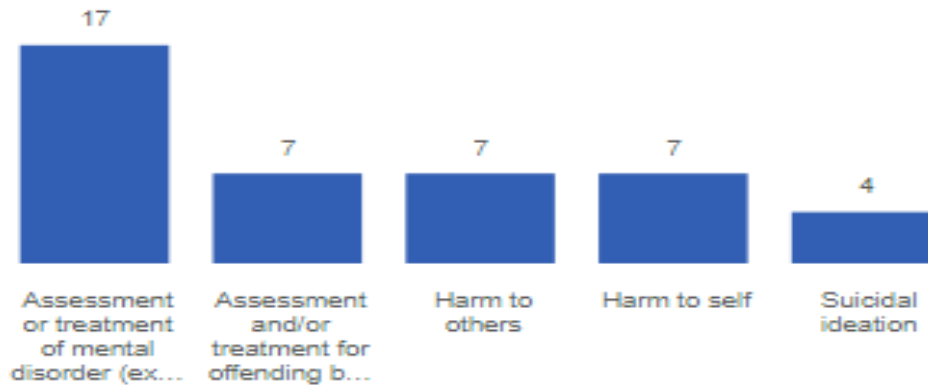
- 8 The background to the Transforming Care programme has been included in previous reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board, for example the 'Learning Disabilities and Transforming Care Update' presented on the 17 September 2019 and the update reports in March 2021 and May 2022. Regular updates have also been shared with the Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership.
- 9 This report aims to give an overview of the progress made with the strategic priorities, with a clear focus on Transforming Care. This update is from the perspective of the Integrated Strategic Commissioning service within the County Durham Care Partnership and takes into account the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on service delivery and strategic objectives.

Current position- Inpatient Trajectory

- 10 In line with Integrated Care Board (ICB) Planning Guidance, ICBs are expected to reduce the inappropriate hospital occupancy of people with a learning disability, autism or both to meet a planned trajectory. NENC ICB Trajectories for 24/25 are to be confirmed. In terms of Local Durham our most recent target is 13 adult inpatients beds per million adult population, and 17 adult inpatients in NHS England-commissioned specialist (secure) beds per million adult population. Durham current inpatient position as of June 2024. This shows that the number of inpatients (28) has increased from time of last report June 2023 from 26. Of the 28 inpatients 22 are male (including trans males) and 4 female (including trans females), all are white ethnic group.
- 11 16 inpatients have a diagnosis of autism only; 9 have a learning disability diagnosis and 3 have both learning disability and autism diagnosis. Reasons for admission are shown in Table 1 below. This shows 17 patients are currently receiving assessment or treatment of mental disorder.

Table 1: Reason for admission as inpatient

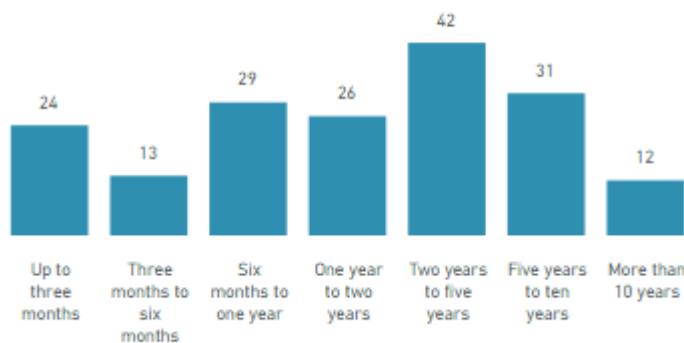
Admission reason (16b)



12 Table 2 shows the position across NENC end of June 2024, with 177 inpatients and the length of stay. The number of inpatients has not reduced down to target levels.

Table 2-NENC Position June 2024

Length of stay at current provider



Community Developments

13 Several new developments have now been completed or are progressing towards completion. These services will be supported by the Specialist Health Team and integrated community teams, ensuring relevant expertise is on hand to support providers and help develop their skills and competence in working with people who have complex needs.

Whitebeam Gardens, Harelaw

- 14 This specialist supported housing development, a £3.35m eco-friendly scheme, at Harelaw in Annfield Plain was completed in December 2023. Finance for the scheme was through capital funding from NHSE, Durham County Council (DCC) and the housing Provider Choice Support, and a contribution for the Community Discharge Grant. Whitebeam Gardens offers sustainable, flexible housing to support adults (18+) with learning disabilities and autism with associated complex needs.
- 15 The new supported living service at Harelaw will help people to maximise their potential and remain as independent as possible through the use of assistive technology, skilled support staff and focused rehabilitation. There are six properties, originally intended as four longer-term homes, and two step up/step down properties, allowing people to progress at their own pace and in response to their own needs. However, accommodation demand for hospital discharges has resulted in all 6 bungalows being utilised for longer term/permanent occupancy.
- 16 DCC, County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), as it was pre-Integrated Care Board (ICB), the Mental Health and Learning Disability Partnership, NHS England and the housing provider, Choice Support, worked in partnership and collaboration to plan and develop this service. DCC commissioned Embracing Care as the care provider for the service. The aim is for Whitebeam Gardens to be operational by Autumn 2024.
- 18 DCC and the ICB determined through their commissioning planning that there is currently a need to increase provision within County Durham for people with learning disabilities, and or autism, and other associated mental health conditions; at least two new accommodation developments will be required within the next three to five years. Following approval of the Integrated Commissioning Service's Specialist Accommodation plan, the options appraisal for 'Transforming Care 2.0' has commenced.

Hawthorn House

- 19 In October 2023 construction work commenced to develop two self-contained, single occupancy units for use as a short term "step-up/step down" service in Hawthorn House in Durham, which is an in-house residential respite service and forms part of County Durham Care and Support within Adult and Health Services. The service will help people with learning disabilities, including those with autism to transition out of

hospital or prevent hospital admission, enabling those in a crisis to receive the right care at the right time from appropriately trained and skilled staff in a safe environment.

- 20 DCC and County Durham CCG/ICB agreed to share the capital costs to adapt the current building and the ongoing revenue costs required for the project. Construction and renovation works are ongoing and unfortunately behind schedule. The service is partially operational, with four rooms now in use for respite provision.

Other new developments

- 21 Two more new supported living developments for people with learning disabilities and autism, which were progressed in 2022/23 following business case approval, are now near full occupancy. While not specifically Transforming Care projects, they have been developed to increase capacity to meet current demand, accommodate a small number of people leaving hospital and to prevent hospital admission. These are Woodland View in Stanley for 19 people (5 bungalows and 14 self-contained flats) and Prince Bishops Court (Cedar House), Kimblesworth, near Chester-le-Street (5 self-contained flats for people).

Local strategies

- 22 The 'Think Autism in County Durham Strategy' Autism Strategy for children, young people and adults (2018/19 to 2021/22) was reviewed in 2022/23 in line with the new National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults (2021-2026). As a result, the local strategy has been refreshed for 2023/24 -2025/26 and approved by Cabinet.
- 23 The focus of the County Durham Joint Health and Social Care Commissioning Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities (Adults and Young People aged 14+) has been the development of the needed Specialist Accommodation commissioning plan, the key priority of the strategy, which incorporates the Transforming Care objectives.

Regional Plans

- 24 The Regional Disability and Autism Plan is bringing a wide range of partners together to:
- Agree what works well and what needs to change.
 - Make best use of regional and local opportunities.
 - Deliver a focussed action plan to influence market shaping and regional developments.
 - Make best use of current governance arrangements to deliver at pace change to the timeframe of hospital discharges.

- Implement agreed actions over the next two years.

Approach to Wellbeing

- 30 Commissioning activity is already adopting the Approach to Wellbeing principles, e.g. for the planned Transforming Care services, consideration is being given to social value through service specifications and tender processes, which include collaborative commissioning and coproduction approaches. Local residents have been consulted through the planning processes, and the people who will be living in the new services and their families are being involved as much as possible in the design of the accommodation as well as care plans.
- 31 The new services are being commissioned to build resilience, maximise independence and improve outcomes for those who are currently in hospital or other restrictive environments. Commissioners are developing these services in partnership with health, social care and housing providers, working across different sectors to reduce duplication and have a greater impact.

Main implications

- 32 Failure to develop our community services, the way that we support and keep people safe, will impact on the health and wellbeing of our learning disability and autism population. This would also present financial, political and reputational risks for the council and NHS in relation to increased hospital admissions, delayed discharges, poor quality of care and increased costs to the local health and social care system.
- 33 The development of the Specialist Accommodation Commissioning plan by DCC as part of Integrated Commissioning is a major step forward and will be the vehicle for much of the work to increase capacity in the system. However, the health and social care system are facing further challenges, particularly in relation to the increased admissions into Mental Health Services for people with Autism within the scope of Transforming Care. Further work to understand this and respond through local support systems, preventative resources, and wider partnerships is underway.

Conclusion

- 34 Progress on meeting the Transforming Care trajectories has been impacted by the legacy of the Covid pandemic and the change in scope. Progress may also be affected by additional requirements placed on

commissioners by the NHS Long Term plan requirements, Quality Assurance guidance and changes to the Integrated Care System.

- 35 However, the political focus on Transforming care and the current local strategic priorities means that work to develop appropriate community services has continued over the last year. This has resulted in two business cases being approved for longer term and step-up/step down provision within supported living and residential care, one was completed in December 2023 and the other is due for completion in Autumn 2024.
- 36 There has also been a needs-led accommodation review, resulting in the development of a specialist accommodation commissioning plan for people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health issues. This outlines plans over the next 5 years to develop more suitable accommodation and support in the community, prioritising services that meet the Transforming Care objectives. Plans will utilise existing funding resources where available and identify where any new build services are required.
- 37 When these developments come to fruition, the broadening of appropriate community support and improved pathways will help facilitate hospital discharges and prevent unnecessary hospital admissions in the future. They will also help improve health and social care outcomes and quality of life for individuals.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Legal advice continues to be sought on all key aspects of new service developments.

Finance

Capital and revenue requirements are incorporated into detailed business cases for new service developments

Consultation

Consultation and coproduction approaches will be followed as part of new services developments and ongoing involvement in strategy implementation.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The strategic work outlined in this report aims to improve services for all people with learning disabilities and/or autism who may also experience mental health issues.

Climate Change

No implications, climate change will be reference in service specifications for new services

Human Rights

New developments and Quality assurance aims to ensure the human rights of people with learning disabilities/autism/mental health issues are protected.

Crime and Disorder

No implications as a result of this report.

Staffing

No implications as a result of this report.

Accommodation

Referenced within the body of the report. New service developments may involve DDC owned land or buildings, as detailed in relevant business cases.

Risk

Risks of not delivering Transforming Care include poor outcomes for individuals and their families, unnecessary admissions to hospital, poor inpatient care, delayed discharges, increased costs to local health and social care system. Risks to completion/success of new developments required- impact of pandemic on timescales and commissioner and provider market

capacity, workforce issues, political risks and financial risks (significant capital monies required dependent on successful bids).

Procurement

Contract Procedure Rules will be followed for all new services.