

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of **Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 18 November 2024 at 9.30 am**

Present

Councillor V Andrews (Chair)

Members of the Committee

Councillors M Johnson, J Blakey, R Crute, K Earley, D Haney, J Higgins, L A Holmes, L Hovvels, S Quinn and T Stubbs

Co-opted Members

Mrs R Gott and Ms A Stobbart

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Howey, C Kay, C Lines, K Robson, A Savoury, M Simmons and Project Lead G McGee (Healthwatch).

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitutes.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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.

Councillor Earley joined the meeting at 9.55 am

6 Adult Social Care Update on the Outcome of the Local Authority Assessment by the Care Quality Commission under the Health and Care Act 2022

The Committee received a report of the Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services which provided members with an update on the outcome of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assessment of the way in which the Council discharges its adult social care duties under part 1 of the Care Act 2022 undertaken earlier this year.

The report also sought members approval for the Service Improvement Plan to address areas for development set out in the CQC report and our wider service improvement aspirations, progress against which would be subject to annual reporting in the future (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

L Alexander, Head of Adult Care was in attendance to present the report and advised Members that of the 11 Care Quality Commission assessments published Durham County Council were scored joint third.

Councillor Crute referred to the Service Improvement Plan and asked if there was an update. He continued that the some of the timescales were tight and asked if they were on top of the Care Home Market Shaping and if an update could be provided and reassurance that the items that were purple would turn to green within the indicated timescales. With regard to the recommendations, he recommended that an update to future Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings be built into the work programme.

The Head of Adult Care responded that he welcomed the recommendation. He stated that the Improvement Plan was hot off the press, and they were starting to put in place the infrastructure around it. He indicated that some of the timescales were tight, but they believed were accurate and would be kept under review. He was confident that they would be able to address all the items and much of what was identified in the Improvement Plan did not come as a surprise with one or two exceptions.

S Burns, Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning, County Durham Care Partnership, Durham County Council and North East and North Cumbria ICB stated that the commissioning for care homes was on target. She indicated that she could provide a briefing report on this to the Committee.

The Chair referred to the government's announcement today that they were looking at the cost of private sector children's care homes and asked if there was any merit in also looking at adult care provision.

The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning, County Durham Care Partnership, Durham County Council and North East and North Cumbria ICB

indicated that the markets were different and the news from government this morning was welcomed. She stated that they did have a different approach to negotiating fees for children's homes and adults 24-hour care provision. She continued that there was a different mechanism for this market that did not lead to profiteering.

M Laing, Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services advised members that the government had advised that next year they would be publishing a companion plan for Adult and Social Care that would cover some of the issues picked up.

Ms Stoddart referred to technology digital solutions and the use of Artificial Intelligence that had a target of June 2025 and asked if this work had commenced.

The Head of Adult Care responded that they are collaborating with Partners in Care and Health and had held four of five workshops with them and provided details of the workshops and indicated that they were currently looking at what are the priorities moving forward. He continued that a lot of work had been undertaken behind the scenes and provided an example of an Artificial Intelligence pilot for frontline case management where a tool was used such as hospital discharge to help interpret the narrative that had saved some time. They were also working on technology called Enabled Care and provided an example of a tool called virtual home that was a digital tool that allowed front line workers to show a virtual house that identified products available to support people in their home.

Councillor Stubbs asked if any areas identified from the assessment came as a surprise.

The Head of Adult Care responded that he had touched on the equity in experience and outcomes already that focuses on an area that they had considered to be a shortcoming of the Council's social care service. He continued that there were a couple of areas where there was room for improvement and was surprised at the reference to safeguarding. He provided assurance that there was nothing within the report that the service were not responding to in a timely manner nor undertaking practices that may be deemed as potential risks. They had undertaken further work with communication and held briefings and reminded staff of how to make a referral of any safeguarding concerns and reminding the workforce of key component parts.

Members wished to pass on their thanks to Jane Robinson, Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services.

S Gwilym, Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer indicated that it would be appropriate for the committee to reference the Service Improvement Plan when considering the work programme. He advised members that the annual safeguarding report was due to come to committee in January 2025.

Resolved: (i) That the outcome of the CQC assessment be noted.

(ii) That the Adult Social Care Service Improvement Plan 2024-2025 at Appendix 2 of the report be approved.

(iii) That annual update reports on progress with the Service Improvement Plan be agreed.

Councillor J Blakey left the meeting at 10.50 am

Councillor Haney left the meeting at 11.00 am

7 Winter Planning Assurance 2024/25

The Committee received a presentation by S Jacques, Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust and M Laing, Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The presentation provided members with the context, learning from last year, governance and partner plans that included Health and Social Care and other services.

Following the presentation, Members' questions were invited.

Councillor Stubbs referred to the standardised approach of procedures across the region and asked if there was any evidence to show that operating within the ICB structure had offered any benefits to this planning.

The Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust responded that the ICB had convened some peer-to-peer learning events and brought people together from across the region. She provided an example of ambulance handovers being a challenge everywhere and the ICB brought everyone together to ask what everyone was doing and see what could be done. She continued that ICB could convene partners when one area was struggling more than others and have a strategic demand centre that allows them visibility of what is happening and allows support to people who need help by convening partners day or night.

Councillor Quinn stated that it was reassuring to know that lessons had been learnt from the past and moved forward. She then provided details of a service that was provided by the pharmacy for an elderly person that had now been withdrawn and the alternative provision was not suitable. She also stated that it was worrying that services were promoted by pharmacies, but other services removed.

The Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust responded that pharmacies were independent organisations and there was currently a level of dispute between pharmacies and the government. She would investigate an alternative provision for the elderly lady and indicated that it appeared that the alternative provision was put in place as a short-term solution.

Councillor Quinn referred to some medications no longer been available on prescription and her concern was that if you were in hospital, the medication was not prescribed so would not be given to you by the hospital. She also indicated that councillors know their communities and knew those people that were vulnerable.

The Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust responded that they were aware of the brilliant work done on the ground and may loop back in terms of communication.

S Burns, Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning, County Durham Care Partnership, Durham County Council and North East and North Cumbria ICB explained why some drugs were no longer available on prescription and why some services were no longer available at pharmacies. She stated that she would investigate a more sustainable option for the elderly lady. Regarding medication no longer on prescription she indicated that it should still be on patients records and would take this away.

In response to a question from Ms Stobbart, the Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust indicated that the Communication Plan was designed to be solid and would share more details of the plan with some members to see if more could be done or what the plan looks like.

Councillor Earley asked if the beds at Shotley Bridge had been increased to 24.

The Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust responded that they know they can increase the beds but were not at 24 yet.

In response to a further question from Councillor Earley, the Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust indicated that if you look over time, they had more presentations this year than last year but not as much as they planned for in terms of emergency presentations. The demographic was an ageing one and indicated that some of the same day services were not available years ago and were good in turning people around and keeping people independent and in their normal place of residence wherever possible.

Councillor Hovvells stated that local plans work best on the ground and indicated that some parishes and community organisations do not have emergency plans in place. She encouraged everyone to make sure emergency plans are in place. She continued around utility services and priority to some people and asked what work had been done with utility providers.

The Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust indicated that these people were known to the utility providers and received priority.

Councillor Hovvells then referred to mental health and hospitals and asked how hospitals managed their heating as she was aware of some patients been cold in hospital.

Officers responded that they had not heard of patients being cold but would pick this up and advised members that hospitals had back up plans such as generators and that the heating in hospitals should be on all the time.

Councillor Haney referred to UHND having 5 beds in 4 bed bays and asked how routine this appeared to be. He then referred to Shotley Bridge Hospital and the fear that the new build would not happen and indicated if there were 5 beds in 4 bays why don't they utilise Shotley Bridge if additional beds had been identified.

The Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust responded that she was unable to provide statistics but indicated that where they had 5 beds in 4 bed bays this was only done when the space had been risk assessed. She would come back to Councillor Haney on how often this was the case, stressing that this was only done in exceptional circumstances.

Councillor Haney asked for an update on Shotley Bridge Hospital.

The Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust indicated that the national programme had been paused and a review undertaken, and Shotley Bridge Hospital was part of that review. They did not have a date for the conclusion of the review and the Trust would respond when they received the details of the review. If the new build of Shotley Bridge was not supported there needed to be a Plan B for the existing hospital.

J Curry, Programme Manager, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust indicated that they were absolutely committed to the new hospital as an organisation and were waiting to hear the outcome of the review which she believed would be in the coming weeks. There were no funds to further develop a scheme in this financial year and were limited as to what they could do.

Councillor Higgins referred to his electoral division and how residents are no longer offered a choice of hospital when admitted by ambulance and must now go to UHND.

The Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust indicated that she was not aware that a choice was given but would investigate this.

The Chair asked if vaccinations were offered to agency staff in hospitals and social care providers.

The Interim Corporate Director of Adults and Health Services advised that vaccinations were offered to agency workers and provided details of the vaccination programme.

The Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning, County Durham Care Partnership, Durham County Council and North East and North Cumbria ICB advised that she would not be surprised if part of the criteria for agency staff in care homes was that they had to be vaccinated.

Resolved: That the contents of the presentation be noted and agreed that a further report be brought back to the Committee in spring 2025 to assess the effectiveness of the winter planning arrangements.