

COUNTY COUNCIL
20 SEPTEMBER 2017
QUESTIONS FROM AAPs

Question from Weardale AAP

Weardale Area Action Partnership has the lowest population density within the 14 Area Action Partnerships. A unique challenge in our area is that the population of older people is higher than the general population, and thus as a consequence, rural health “practitioners” and those that deliver “rural services” often have to deal with older patients and community members with multiple health needs and chronic disease.

What steps are being taken to integrate health and social care, in order to meet the special demands of the rural Weardale community?

Response

It is recognised that Weardale does present some unique challenges particularly in terms of population density, rurality and demography in relation to service delivery.

Both Health and Social Care services have recognised there is a compelling need for change through integration and have developed 13 Teams Around Patients (TAPs) across County Durham. In Durham Dales there are 3 TAPs which have been at the forefront of TAPs development across County Durham. The TAPs model involves wrapping community based services around G.P. practice areas for patients through an integrated local workforce focussing on the frail elderly and those with long term health conditions, with a strong emphasis on connecting people with community services. As the 3 TAPs in Durham Dales evolve, they will be in a prime position to influence and improve local developments in relation to access to services and the commissioning of future services.

A Council Motion has recently been passed by Durham County Council which calls on local Members of Parliament to lobby the government for the further development of initiatives for the continued recruitment and retention of GPs, which may include a weighting system to support areas across the country where there are difficulties in recruiting GPs. Such a system will create a positive incentive for the GPs to work across the north east, including County Durham, bringing benefits to individuals, as well as our entire communities including our rural communities. Whilst dedicated and hard-working GPs continue to deliver excellent services, this Council needs to ensure that high quality primary care services are secured for our population, now and for future generations.

Question from Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP

Employment, Enterprise and training has been a consistent priority for the Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP and the partnership has supported a number of projects to help individuals overcome barriers to employment. Given this focus, it would be helpful to know what measures the Council may have in place to build on the positive action such as the attraction of Hitachi and the regeneration of Bishop Auckland Town Centre to bring further employment opportunities into the area?

Response

I would like to thank Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP for their question. As jobs and the economy are such a high priority I am delighted to set out how we are seeking to bring forward further employment opportunities.

You referenced Hitachi and their new rail facility at Aycliffe. With its 1000 jobs this is a key building block for the attraction of more employment opportunities across the whole of south Durham and cementing Aycliffe Business Park's position as the largest industrial park in the North East. Jobs growth is not restricted to the business park however, and across the Bishop Auckland and Shildon area, we continue to see interest in development of commercial, leisure and retail projects.

- Focussing on Bishop Auckland town centre, the recently created Brighter Bishop Auckland partnership, brings together key partners who are developing a masterplan to ensure a comprehensive approach to development opportunities. These include those projects being developed by the Auckland Castle Trust and Eleven Arches including the recent announcement of plans for a feasibility study into a themed visitor attraction to complement Kynren and the proposals for the Castle. Overall it is hoped these proposals will add to the 150 jobs created so far, with a mix of both direct and indirect jobs.
- We also continue to deliver a range of programmes to ensure local people have the right skills and are prepared for and aware of the new opportunities.
- These include programmes such as:
 - DurhamWorks which is focussed on supporting young people to progress into employment;
 - Our AAP funded mentoring programme which is focussed on supporting local people to access opportunities;
 - The County Council's welfare reform employability programmes which assist those most impacted by national benefit changes.

These all combine to provide a comprehensive offer which over the past year has seen almost 300 residents access employment or skills training within the BASH AAP's geography.

Going forward we are trying to help local small businesses to grow and to access new opportunities provided by visitors to the town through increasing the use of digital skills. We have also assisted a local school to access European Funding so it can develop specific projects for students which focus on the future skills needed by local businesses to meet the needs of local residents and international visitors alike.