

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL 17 February 2016

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Winter Warmth Campaign

1. The Staying Put Agency has secured additional funds to enhance its winter warmth campaign. The funds are to be used to purchase practical items such as: fleeces, thermal blankets, gloves, hats, microwaves, CO monitors, food parcels, etc. The scheme aims to assist residents over the winter period who are in need of support due to their age and/or medical condition. This complements our existing boiler repair, snow clearing and gritting service and also energy efficiency measures in the home. Medical experts agree that exposure to the cold increase the number of winter deaths and readmissions to hospital, associated mainly with respiratory or cardio-vascular ailments. Older people with existing health problems are particularly at risk. The campaign will help these households to stay warm and improve their health.

Winter Pressures

2. Staff from Social Care continue to participate in teleconferencing with partner agencies in health and social care in response to increasing levels of pressure on hospitals across the North East. These calls, co-ordinated by NHS England, take place with varying frequency, depending on escalating or reducing pressure on the partners, and are based on a set of established North East Escalation Plan thresholds for providing support to health trusts and local authorities.
3. While South Tees Hospitals Foundation Trust has been forced to raise its "NEEP Level" on a number of occasions (this relates to the multi-agency North East Escalation Plan that reflects pressure on the system and sets triggers for actions in response), this has still not translated into unusual pressure for the hospital based social work team which continues to operate at a sustainable level in line with expectations for this time of year. At the most recent telecom we were able to report that we have capacity within the domiciliary care and care home sectors and no significant workforce pressures within our own teams.

Mental Health Conveyancing

4. Middlesbrough has experienced ongoing difficulties for some time, shared with colleagues across Tees and across the North East, with regards to timely ambulance transport for people experiencing acute mental health problems to take them to hospital for admission and treatment. This has led to long and stressful delays for patients and staff members in what is already a stressful situation with delays of up to six hours on occasion.
5. Following discussion with the South Tees Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and colleagues across Tees an interim agreement with CCG has been reached with an agreement from them to fund private ambulance provision at times of high demand.

This reduces risk for patients and the Council employed Approved Mental Health Practitioners and will be piloted over the next three months during which a more permanent solution will be decided upon.

Reablement

6. As previously reported, Human Support Group (HSG) were appointed as the external provider for reablement services in Middlesbrough with their new service starting on 1 March 2015. The number of referrals to the service in the first 10 months from the 1 March to the end of December 2015 totalled 238. 21 of those referred still have reablement in place. Therefore, out of the 217 individuals who have completed reablement, 170 were successfully reabled and showed either a reduction in the care and support required or no further care and support needed. This is a significant success story and has enabled the individuals to increase their level of function and independence. For some individuals it has meant they have been able to remain in their own home where previously a residential care admission may have been required.
7. The majority of referrals for reablement are from hospital Social Workers. The reablement is used to help recovery, regain independence and maintain the individual's maximum level of function. New telecare equipment is to be utilised as an integral element of the alongside reablement in order to complement the service and in doing so will ensure that the client has extra preventative measures in place. This will be introduced from 1 February 2016.
8. As the success of reablement lies in the avoidance of cost it is difficult to calculate with a high degree of confidence the money that has not been required because of the success of the service to date. The "pilot" avoidance tracker that we are developing does however indicate avoided cost in the region of £215,000 this year; we have sufficient confidence in the developing tracker to feel assured that we have indeed avoided the vast majority of the costs indicated.

Community Inclusion Service

9. The Community Inclusion Service, alongside the Orchard, North Ormesby and Living Life have throughout January been providing placement opportunities for Cleveland police trainees. The programme of placements is a follow on to a very successful placement programme that took place in the Spring of 2015. The opportunity has been a great success, and has provided both insight and learning for police officers around working and supporting people with a disability.
10. The Police Officers receive a Pack of Information that helps them throughout their placement and provides an insight into the services that Middlesbrough Council provide for Adults with Disabilities. As part of the placement we ask them all to complete a feedback questionnaire.
11. The additional benefit that the placement provides is around our work with the police and hate crime. The Community Inclusion Service has been instrumental in producing a DVD with Cleveland Police to help them understand the impact that Hate crime can have on people with disabilities, they now use it as part of their police training.

12. A reflective comment from one of the police trainees:

“From a personal perspective, our visits to the day care centre offered by Middlesbrough Council offered a fantastic insight into the more vulnerable part of our society. It was amazing to observe the carers working closely with those suffering from various forms of learning disabilities and memory issues. Professionally speaking the visits reinforced the positive perceptions that I hold about caring services, along with enhancing Cleveland Police’s relationships with the many caring services”.

ADULT HEALTH

Rogue Landlord Funding Success

13. Middlesbrough Council have been awarded £100,000 of funding by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to tackle ‘Rogue Landlords’, following concerns about the national housing stock in the private rented sector and recent high profile cases such as the beds in sheds cases in London. The money will be spent in the North Ormesby Selective Landlord Licensing area to provide additional support to the scheme, which is based on issues surrounding antisocial behaviour in the area. Every house licensed under the scheme will receive a full Housing inspection, and action will be taken as necessary to ensure that all the properties covered by the scheme meet legal standards. Any actions that result in a successful prosecution against a landlord could also impact on their ‘fit and proper person’ status, meaning they may no-longer be able to hold a Selective Landlord Licence or House in Multiple Occupation Licence, putting significant pressure on them to maintain good quality properties.

Illegal Eviction Case brought to Court

14. A landlord has narrowly avoided a spell behind bars after being convicted of illegally evicting a family from their rented property in the Longlands and Beechwood Ward in Middlesbrough. The case was brought by the Environmental Protection Team following an investigation into the eviction. The family had been evicted from their home by the landlord, who had entered the property illegally and forcibly removed the tenants against their wishes. After the eviction had taken place, the landlord went on to bundle some of the family’s personal possessions into black bags.
15. Fortunately, the family were able to stay with friends and contacted the Environmental Protection Team for assistance. Officers investigating the case found clear evidence that the eviction was illegal and the landlord was charged with offences under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977. The family were eventually let back into the house after the landlord had sought legal advice on their actions.
16. The landlord was sentenced to a 12-month Community Order with ten days of rehabilitation activities and 100 hours of unpaid work. They were also ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £60 and £400 towards the Council’s costs. During the trial it also emerged that the offence placed the landlord in breach of an existing suspended sentence.

Unsafe House in Multiple Occupation Closed

17. Environmental Protection staff responding to a complaint of unsafe accommodation used their emergency closure powers to prohibit the use of an unsafe house in multiple occupation (HMO). When they visited the property in the Central Ward, officers discovered the unsafe conditions, which included inadequate fire protection between a ground floor commercial outlet and the living accommodation above, a lack of fire escapes, a lack of a fire detection and alarm system, a lack of emergency lighting and lack of fire doors in the common areas of the building.
18. In accordance with housing laws, before being able to rent out the property, the landlord would have to obtain a licence from the council. The conditions of the licence, which aim to make the property safe, would have to be complied with. The poor conditions found in the property meant that a licence to operate as an HMO would not have been granted.

Clean Air Confirmed

19. The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has recently written to the Environmental Protection Team to approve its latest air quality report - 'Update and Screening Assessment for 2014'. The report summarises our air quality monitoring outcomes for 2014, which show that air quality in Middlesbrough meets national air quality standards. Defra officials described the report, which covers the Tees Valley area, as being well structured and an example of good practice that demonstrates a co-ordinated approach to local air quality management across neighbouring authorities.
20. Air quality is monitored in real time at two locations in the town, and the results feed into the national air quality monitoring network. The Department also supports the diffusion tube survey that Environmental Protection Officers are currently undertaking to investigate levels of Nitrogen dioxide in the town. The fact we meet the national air quality standards is therefore good news for the Town.

Councillor Julia Rostron
Executive Member for Adult Health & Social Care