

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**18 February 2015****STATEMENT OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH INTEGRATION
PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR CLARE WOOD****Winter Issues**

The health and social care system across the County has faced significant pressures since early December and has been working at a heightened level of escalation since before Christmas. I would like to thank all County Council, NHS and independent and voluntary sector staff who have worked tirelessly to keep people safe and well during this period.

All Hospital Accident and Emergency Departments (Airedale, Friarage, Harrogate, Scarborough and York - as well as Darlington and James Cook, which are also used by North Yorkshire residents) have been experiencing a surge in people attending for treatment, many of whom have required hospital admission. Particular pressure points have been experienced at Harrogate, York and Scarborough, with the latter declaring a major incident for a period of 24 hours in January. This situation meant that the Trust could prioritise its emergency work and where necessary cancel routine operations and outpatient appointments so that staff would be available to support those patients who were the most unwell.

In the run-up to Christmas, there was also a reduction in nursing and residential home capacity in the County - in part as a result of quality enforcement action taken by the Care Quality Commission, working with health and social care commissioners, to ensure that people in care homes are safe and well. Two domiciliary care providers also ceased operating just before Christmas. These circumstances have added to the stretched capacity across adult social care and NHS services.

At this stage, it is difficult to pinpoint a single cause of the surge in people needing care and treatment. More people have been presenting with chest infections and pneumonia. There is also some evidence to suggest that higher numbers of younger people have been presenting at A+E with minor ailments, rather than going to their pharmacist, GP or ringing 111.

In this situation, the County Council has been drawing on its unique size, scale, flexibility and visible presence in all areas of the County to support vulnerable people - and has been doing so at pace. We have diverted and re-deployed teams to work with those people who most need our help, asking staff to work in different locations and services.

The County Council and the NHS have been sending out media messages with advice to the public about which services to use, how to keep well and warm and emphasising that we are having to prioritise essential and emergency care.

County Council staff, and the care providers we commission, have been working with hospitals, primary care and community health services to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital where possible and to move people on from hospital as soon as they can be discharged safely. Everyone who could be discharged safely has been discharged - one of the challenges is that a large number of people needed to be in hospital and required nursing care.

The County Council has long had a good track-record on discharging people from hospital and we have maintained this position, under severe pressure.

The County Council's network of respite, rehabilitation and winter pressures beds have been used to help people recover and we have worked with CCGs and independent and voluntary sector providers to commission additional short term bed capacity in nursing homes, where necessary.

We have updated Government, local MPs and the Local Government Association about the situation in North Yorkshire and our messages have been as follows:

- North Yorkshire is coping - for the time-being - although the level of demand seems unprecedented and current performance will be difficult to sustain for a prolonged period
- Our staff are demonstrating a selfless commitment to public service. County Council and NHS colleagues are working well together
- The crucial point which the current situation highlights is this one: you cannot protect the NHS without protecting social care. Social care should be treated on a level-playing field with the NHS in the future: protection for one should mean protection for both.
- Future funding allocations also need to take more account of rurality, both in terms of the costs of care provision and the viability of the market in the most remote areas.
- One specific area which we feel needs more attention nationally is the viability and quality of independent sector nursing homes and the recruitment and retention of nurses. Whilst fewer people need 24 hour nursed care on a long term basis, there are a significant number of very frail people who do and for whom it is vital so that they can avoid being admitted to, or can be discharged safely from, hospital.

The Government has recently announced extra one-off funding for adult social care, which is to be welcomed. A national allocation of £25m has been shared between those councils with the highest numbers of people awaiting discharge from hospital (this allocation does not include North Yorkshire) and a further £12m allocation has been shared between the remaining councils – North Yorkshire will receive £230,000 from this subsequent funding.

Dementia Support

I have been very pleased to support the dementia initiatives which are growing across the County. It is really encouraging to see how communities and organisations are rising to the challenge, and to see the impact that our new Dementia Support Services are already having, both with individuals and families and in supporting communities to become more dementia friendly and aware.

In December I was delighted to meet with one of our previous employees, Chris Riley, who has set himself the task of recruiting 100 dementia friends in a year. At that point he had already persuaded 600 people.

And this month I have been able to attend the launch of the Dementia Reading Well initiative, at Northallerton Library. With funding from Public Health, all our libraries will help people with dementia and their carers to access books which will offer information and advice, as part of the national scheme.

Extra Care

I am glad to be able to report that residents have now moved into new Extra Care schemes in both Settle and Scarborough. The scheme in Scarborough, at Jazz Court, has enabled us to offer new homes to residents from Braeburn House.

We completed the consultation on the Care and Support Where I Live Strategy in November, with good support for our proposals within the strategy. The results have been considered and well-received by Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the consultation and final draft Strategy will be taken to the Executive in March.

Domiciliary Care

In January, we awarded new framework contracts for the provision of domiciliary care in Harrogate and Selby.

The specification for the contracts reflects the current best practice, which some providers are already offering, with more explicit requirements about the quality that we expect when we are buying care for people. The new standards include requiring providers to offer more personalised support to those using the service, and clearer expectations around timeliness of visits and continuity of carers. We will be working with a smaller number of providers, enabling us to develop stronger relationships with care services and to monitor quality more closely. We have also secured prices which we believe offer best value for taxpayers' money.

The new contracts do mean that some people will change provider and we are working carefully with people to minimise any disruption they may experience. We will be working with the current and new providers over the next weeks to agree any transfers of care for people. We are continuing to work on the framework contract for Scarborough and we are beginning to look at how we can shape the market in other more rural areas.

Health and Care Integration

As you will have heard before, we have been working through 2014 to create the North Yorkshire Better Care Fund plan, which describes how we and our partners in the NHS will work to protect social care services in North Yorkshire while reducing the number of unplanned admissions to hospital, with an increased emphasis on community services, whether social care, General Practice or community health services. I am pleased to confirm that this plan has now been fully approved by NHS England.

Clare Wood