

Health & Adult Scrutiny Committee – 4 Year Overview

Report of the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Members

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1 Recommendation

That after the Devon County Council local election 2025, the new Council recognises the value of effective Overview and Scrutiny and continues the work this Overview and Scrutiny Committee has led on over the last 4 years.

2 Preface

I would like to thank the Members, officers and professionals for their support and guidance over the last four years. It has been challenging, difficult and rewarding getting to grips with the world of Health and Adult Social Care. Members, I am sure like me you are grateful for the time and explanations given to us on our quest to ensure residents receive timely and good quality care when it is most needed.

The Committee has probed, questioned and at times disagreed with the pace of change or decisions taken. Despite this, I am grateful for the critical friend approach adopted during our meetings.

The effects and legacy from the Covid-19 lockdowns are still being felt within the health and care system. While challenges persist, we have seen and heard first-hand the extraordinary work that is going on across Devon, the achievements and success. We on the [Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee](#) want, again, to put on record our thanks to everyone working in the Devon health and care system both employed and volunteers for all they are doing and their continued commitment. The work of the Health and Adult Scrutiny Committee has vulnerable residents' welfare at the heart of everything we do. Members have continued to shine a spotlight on the invaluable role of unpaid carers in the County and I would encourage the new Committee to do likewise, recognising carers as the tremendous asset that they are.

Devon faces mounting pressure to deliver health and care services, in particular to our non-urban residents in smaller isolated settlements yet still has so much to be proud of. As Chair, I try to ensure that we remain focussed at every Committee meeting to champion the wellbeing of our residents. As we move to a new Council, the Committee will need to maintain attention on Integrated Adult Social Care as the service continues to evolve. As the Council remains committed to its vision of promoting independence via a strengths-based approach alongside managing the key pressures the service faces. It will be essential that Overview and Scrutiny is both the critical yet challenging friend

supporting officers and listening to the people of Devon to continually improve our services for the benefit of our residents.

The work of the Committee is never finished, and the incoming Members will no doubt pick up the baton and continue to chase for better care for all residents of Devon.

Thank you to all for your contribution.

**Councillor Sara Randall Johnson, Chair
Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee**

Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee Members

- Councillor Sara Randall-Johnson (Chair)
- Councillor Alan Connett (Vice-Chair 2024 – Present)
- Councillor Martin Wrigley (Vice- Chair 2021-2024)
- Councillor Yvonne Atkinson
- Councillor Jess Bailey
- Councillor Richard Chesterton
- Councillor David Cox
- Councillor Paul Crabb
- Councillor Ian Hall
- Councillor Linda Hellyer
- Councillor Pru Maskell
- Councillor Ron Peart
- Councillor Richard Scott
- Councillor Debo Sellis
- Councillor Carol Whitton
- Councillor Jeremy Yabsley
- Councillor Claire Hodson (Devon District Councils Representative)

3 Committee Meetings

The Committee meets 6 times a year in public to review issues and make recommendations to the Council's Cabinet, the NHS, and sometimes other organisations. These meetings are livestreamed and available to the public to watch live or after the meeting.

Following elections and a new Council in May 2021, the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee has sought to ensure ongoing public scrutiny of the NHS's recovery and restoration journey from the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic naturally effected the way in which Health and Adult Care Scrutiny could operate, but the function quickly evolved to ensure that Members were sighted in terms of planning and service delivery, as well as still maintaining that vital challenge to the system. The Committee has remained mindful to try to retain a focus on performance across the wider health and care system.

Over the last 4 years this Committee has taken their responsibility to do this seriously, recognising the importance of understanding the inherent complexities of the system. The Committee has participated in information sharing and Member development sessions which

has helped them to appropriately and significantly hold both the health service and social care service to account at local level.

The Scrutiny Committee has raised awareness of both Devon's health services and the Council's social care services and ensured that the Committee reflects the multiple perspectives of residents. Residents can come to the Committee and present their views directly through representations, in line with the Council's public participation guidance, as well as indirectly through their County Councillor. Through this process overview and scrutiny can influence policy and decisions. For instance, the Committee, responding to the concerns of local people, produced a series of recommendations to Cabinet on the future of the North Devon Link Service, which were accepted, to assure a smooth transition process for those affected. Members recommended the development of community-based solutions to meet identified needs and the emerging long-term pattern of community based mental health support as a result of this process. The Committee will continue to monitor progress against these recommendations.

The Committee has maintained a focus on the policies of the Council including inequalities, understanding the importance of the wider determinants of health and local actions to reduce these. The Committee also continues to receive regular updates on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse (DSVA) from the Member appointed to raise awareness on DSVA.

Throughout the last 4 years there have been challenges in terms of the savings required to meet a growing gap between the amount of funding received by the Authority and the cost of meeting its statutory responsibilities. The Committee has closely tracked these savings to ensure the Council balances its budget in line with its strategic objectives, and the needs of residents. Members have also continued to monitor the 'One Devon' Integrated Care Board budget deficit through regular update reports. National policy has promoted and incentivized an Integrated Care System (ICS) which has to encompass the two different financial budgets and budget controls and protocols of Local Government and the NHS. The work undertaken by the Committee interrogating, scrutinising and challenging the ICS over the last 4 years is described in this report.

4 Task Groups

An in-depth review undertaken by a small group of Members over a number of meetings, will determine its own terms of reference and report back to public committee with recommendations.

Teignmouth Community Hospital

Throughout the term of this Council, there has been significant consideration by the Committee of the future of services in the Teignmouth and Dawlish area, alongside a particular focus on Teignmouth Community Hospital. The Committee's 2021 referral to the Secretary of the State was in 2022 turned down on the grounds that the then Clinical Commissioning Group did 'consult adequately with the Scrutiny Committee'. After further concerns were raised by local Members, the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee resolved to set up a Task Group to gather evidence in regard to making another referral to the Secretary of State on the grounds that the proposal (from the NHS) to close the Community Hospital 'would not be in the interests of the health service in the area'.

In June 2023 Members published an [interim report](#), with a [final report](#) presented to 9 November 2023 Health & Adult Care Scrutiny. It was resolved that the Committee takes steps to make a referral to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the decision to move services

from Teignmouth Community Hospital and build a Health and Wellbeing Centre on Brunswick Street, Teignmouth. In January 2024 Members raised concerns on the potential impact of another referral on the future of healthcare services in the Teignmouth and Dawlish area; including not wishing to detriment the provision of these services by a potential decision to refer, and whether there was adequate evidence to justify another referral, taking into consideration the Independent Reconfiguration Panel's previous support of the proposals. A vote that the Committee continue with the process of referring the closure of Teignmouth Community Hospital to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care was lost.

End of Life Care

The Members published their [final report](#) of the End of Life Task Group which was considered at the 27 January 2025 Committee.

The Task Group recognised that there is 'only one chance to get End of Life Care right' and there is a need to drive up the standard of care in Devon to ensure that people receive access to the right support at the right time whichever part of the County they live in. This was one of a series of recommendations made by the End of Life Care Task Group. Members received written submissions and heard evidence from a range of groups and experts including from Integrated Adult Social Care, the NHS and Healthwatch. Councillors also listened to the views and first-hand experiences of professionals who support and care for those at the end of their lives such as GPs, care homes and hospices.

The report highlights earlier GP identification of patients at the end of their lives. Earlier identification would help individuals and families plan better and allow more people to spend their last days being cared for within the community. It would also help out-of-hours providers to better understand the needs of that individual and ensure fair access to care and support tailored to the individual's needs and wishes. The Task Group also recommended a full review of all information and advice currently available in Devon on palliative, end of life care and bereavement to ensure that advice was equally accessible to everyone. By ensuring that the right information and advice was equally accessible it would better help patients' families and professionals consider their options and understand treatment decisions.

1) Spotlight Reviews

A short, sharp, focussed investigation, usually undertaken on one day, will report back to public committee with recommendations.

South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust

In June 2022 Members [final report](#) from their Spotlight Review on South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust was published. Members made a series of recommendations to help reduce ambulance response and patient 'handover' times at hospitals. The recommendations follow a Spotlight Review at which leaders in the Integrated Care System for Devon, including the County Council, the then NHS Devon Clinical Commissioning Group and the Ambulance Service, were invited to share their knowledge and expertise. The Spotlight Review concluded that an urgent 'systemwide' commitment to improve average response times was needed, and that all of Devon's acute hospitals should adopt the Rapid Patient Assessment and Triage model used by the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital.

Community Pharmacy

The Members published their [final report](#) of the Community Pharmacy Spotlight Review on 20 January 2023, with a series of recommendations to improve patient outcome and experience. This review was instigated by the Committee following reports of a disruption to the pharmacy services in several parts of North and East Devon. There were unplanned closures, when collecting prescriptions, people experienced lengthy queues to be served and delays with repeat prescription being dispensed.

Carers – A Follow Up

On [13 March 2023](#) the *Carers – A Follow Up* Spotlight Review was presented to the Committee and a series of recommendations agreed. The Review highlighted the invaluable role that unpaid carers play and emphasised how vital it is that the County Council, the health system, and the wider society both recognises and values this. It is essential that carers in Devon are identified and supported.

5 Standing Overview Group

The Standing Overview Group meets as an information sharing and Member development session where issues are presented to Members to raise awareness and increase knowledge. Any action points arising from the sessions are reported back to the formal Committee meeting.

Quality Accounts

The Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee have, over the last 4 years, been working with the following key health providers in the County to monitor their performance:

- Devon Partnership NHS Trust
- Torbay and South Devon Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust
- South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust
- Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Healthcare trusts are required under the Health Act 2009 and subsequent Health and Social Care Act 2012 to produce and publish an annual Quality Account. Quality Accounts detail quality and safety improvements from the previous year as well as planned improvements for the year to come. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, NHS providers had routinely delivered presentations to the Members of the Standing Overview Group, on their Quality Accounts and their priorities in terms of improvement. This process informed the Quality Account statements which are produced by the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee and sent to the providers to be incorporated into their Quality Accounts.

The reporting of Quality Accounts was significantly disrupted during the pandemic which made a single evidence session impractical – due to timeframes and frontline availability. The Committee has always been mindful of not adding additional pressures to stretched services, but in September 2023 it was agreed to reinstate sessions with the providers to discuss their Quality Accounts and overall performance reporting back to Committee. Providers attended sessions with Members on:

- [8 February 2024](#)
- 13 February 2025

Members have also undertaken site visits to providers developing their understanding of service delivery and patient experience. Health providers have also regularly been invited to contribute to Members series of masterclasses as well as formally reporting to Committee.

Public Health

On [18 August 2021](#) the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee's Standing Overview Group held a meeting to review with officers the [2020/21 Public Health Annual Report](#), which was focused on the Covid-19 pandemic response in Devon. The session provided Members with the opportunity to develop their understanding of Public Health, and drill down into areas of interest.

Integrated Adult Social Care Customer Feedback

The Standing Overview Group met on 22 July 2024 to review [Integrated Adult Social Care Customer Feedback](#). Members welcomed the level of detail that was provided to them and the objective appraisal of the issues surrounding customer feedback. Learning from both complaints and compliments remains an area for development. Ensuring there is a robust approach to gathering and processing customer feedback is essential in providing high quality services and care to the people of Devon.

Devon Dementia Strategy

On 6 February 2025 Members met with officers from Devon Partnership Trust, as well as the Council's Integrated Adult Social Care and Public Health to review the emerging Devon Dementia Strategy.

6 Visits

Members undertook a series of visits to health and care settings across the County both as part of their task group reviews and also to get a first-hand account from staff of where the system is working well, how supported they feel and where there may be issues of concern. There is huge value in Councillors being able to triangulate theory with practice and patient experience.

Replacement Day Care

In November 2022, Members undertook a series of visits to the County Council's learning disability day centres. This was against the backdrop of an impact assessment having been undertaken in June 2022 on reviewing the potential cessation of providing buildings-based day services. Members visited the following:

- Nichols Centre, Exeter
- Abbey Rise, Tavistock
- Rushbrook Centre, Totnes

The Members published their [report](#) on Replacement Day Care which was presented to Committee on 20 January 2023.

Langdon Hospital / Franklyn Hospital – Devon Partnership Trust

Members visited Langdon Hospital and Franklyn Hospital, both of which are run by Devon Partnership Trust. Providing a [report](#) to Committee on their findings on 21 November 2024. Langdon Hospital is a secure unit for men from the South West who, as a consequence of their mental health needs, have had contact with the legal system and require a safe and secure environment that enables them to receive a wide range of treatments, therapies and care to assist in their recovery. Franklyn Hospital has two wards totalling 30 beds for older people with dementia and a range of mental health needs providing assessment and treatment as well for those with depression, anxiety and psychosis.

NHS Nightingale Hospital Exeter

On 24 June 2024 the Committee received the [report](#) of Members visit to NHS Nightingale Hospital, Exeter. The NHS Nightingale Hospital, Exeter, was initially part of the national response to Covid-19 and is the only one of 7 Nightingales nationally to still be open. NHS Nightingale Hospital Exeter, is hosted by the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust but patients attend from across the County. The Hospital's comparatively small size has been advantageous in relation to innovation and transformation. Testing new models of care has led the way in transformative work both in Devon and nationally in terms of how elective diagnostic recovery can be supported at an off-site centre away from urgent care pressures. By dealing with entirely elective procedures NHS Nightingale Hospital Exeter, does not have the competing demands of an acute hospital or the same issues around patient flow to manage. The net result of which has been to shrink waiting lists.

7 Masterclasses

Masterclasses are information sharing sessions where issues are presented informally to Members to raise awareness and increase knowledge. These sessions have enabled trusting, and candid relationships to develop with officers. Masterclasses are sometimes also attended by fellow Scrutiny Members from Plymouth and Torbay, demonstrating the maturity of relationships across the 'One Devon' partnership and a commitment to joint working and collaboration.

Members held the following sessions over the last 4 years:

- 6 July 2021 - Safeguarding Adults
- 20 July 2021 - Community Health and Social Care Teams: An Overview
- 3 August 2021 - Health & Adult Social Care Workforce
- 19 August 2021 - Integrated Care System and Local Care Partnership Development
- 5 October 2021 – Improving Support for People with Disabilities
- 22 October 2021 - Current System Pressures and Future System Vision
- 24 November 2021 - Introduction to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- 29 November 2021 - Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- *14 January 2022 - Improving community support for people in Devon with serious mental health needs*
- 10 March 2022 - Proposed Merger of NDHT and RD&E
- 10 March 2022 - Our Future Hospital Programme
- 11 March 2022 - Protected Elective Care
- 19 May 2022 – Adult Social Care Reforms
- 7 June 2022 – Primary Care Strategy
- 26 July 2022 – Community Urgent Care

- 7 September 2022 - Housing, Health and Care
- 11 October 2022 - Integrated Care Strategy for Devon
- 8 November 2022 - The state of Adult Social Care
- 13 December 2022 - Peninsula Acute Sustainability
- 5 January 2023 - Adult Social Care Assurance Framework
- 1 February 2023 – Dentistry
- 20 April 2023 - 5 Year Joint Forward Plan
- 26 April 2023 - Digital & Technology Enabled Care Solutions
- 15 June 2023 – Peer Challenge
- 20 July 2023 - Transforming Transition for young people in Devon
- 18 September 2023 – NHS Dentistry (webinar)
- 27 September 2023 - *Integrated Adult Social Care Improvement Plan and Preparing for CQC Assurance*
- 1 November 2023 - NHS 111
- 27 November 2023 – Public Health Annual Report 2022/23
- 6 December 2023 - Torbay and Devon Safeguarding Adult Partnership
- 27 February 2024 - Integrated Adult Social Care Self-Assessment / Annual Report
- 8 July 2024 - Peninsula Acute Sustainability Programme
- 14 October 2024 Annual Public Health Report 2023/24
- 14 January 2025 Right Care, Right Person

The Committee also held annual work programming sessions to review their priorities for focus over the 12 months ahead.

8 Workshops

The Local Government Association provided a [one-day training workshop](#) *Prevention Matters* on 21 May 2024 linked in with the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee to enable Members to champion health improvement and prevention in their communities. The session helped Members understanding of their individual role in supporting the prevention agenda, as well as applying learning from the day with their local knowledge to help Members consider the next steps to improve health and well-being in their communities.

9 Specialist Advisors

The Committee benefits from the expertise of a specialist advisor supporting Members in their Scrutiny role. Members would like to thank Margaret Wilcox OBE for her contribution in the post until 2023 and also thank Peter Hay CBE for his invaluable support and insight in the role since.

10 Conclusion

The Committee appreciate the culture Cabinet and officers of both the County Council and NHS Devon have helped to establish with the Scrutiny function; recognising Scrutiny as key to good governance and in turn good outcomes for local people. The Scrutiny challenge is welcomed by the County Council, giving those Members without a portfolio an important role in holding the decision makers to account and making a difference to ensure the most vulnerable people are cared for. Better Scrutiny leads to more effective decision-making, reduced risk and ultimately, improved outcomes.

11 Options / Alternatives

The report is the summary of the activity of the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee. Scrutiny does not make decisions and this report does not propose any alternatives.

12 Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

As above, there are no specific considerations in regard to consultations, representations and technical data in this report.

13 Strategic Plan

The alignment of all Scrutiny activity with the Strategic Plan is detailed on the Scrutiny work programme. The issues raised in the report and the benefit of developing Member knowledge and the 'critical friend' challenge of Scrutiny contribute to the Council achieving its strategic plan. Improving Member knowledge on key issues contributes to the Council's commitment to being a trusted, inclusive and innovative Council. It ensures good decision making and that the Council listens and learns.

14 Financial Considerations

There are no specific financial considerations in this report.

15 Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations in this report.

16 Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

There are no specific environmental impact considerations in this report.

17 Equality Considerations

There are no specific equality considerations in this report.

18 Risk Management Considerations

The activity of Scrutiny Members contributes to the mitigations for:

Ineffective Member Scrutiny defined as: 'Due to ineffective scrutiny, the level and quality of service management may drop, leading to financial mismanagement or harm to staff and/or citizens and reputational damage e.g. Grenfell.

Member effectiveness defined as: 'Inadequate member effectiveness due to a lack of training, support and knowledge leads to a lack of challenge to corporate officers and/or poor decision

making, resulting in a negative effect on the County's citizens (poor value for money, poor service delivery, harm, etc).

Name:

Director of Legal and Democratic Services, Maria Price

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce & Digital Transformation,
Councillor Andrew Saywell.

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers – Nil

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