

## Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

A meeting of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee was held on Tuesday 21 April 2026.

**Present:** Cllr Marc Besford (Chair), Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Jack Miller, Cllr Vanessa Sewell, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

**Officers:** Angela Connor, Rebecca Gray, Graham Lyons, Carolyn Nice (A,H&W); James O'Donnell, Jacqui Warrior, Gary Woods (CS)

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Pauline Beall (SBC Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care); Sarah Jones (Catalyst Stockton-on-Tees)

**Apologies:** None

### **ASCH/1/26 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

### **ASCH/2/26 Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

### **ASCH/3/26 Minutes**

Consideration was given to the minutes from the Committee meeting held on 17 February 2026.

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting on 17 February 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **ASCH/4/26 Stockton-on-Tees Wellbeing Hub**

*Cllr Marc Besford wished it to be recorded for transparency purposes only that he was currently an employee of Catalyst Stockton-on-Tees.*

The Committee received a presentation on the Stockton-on-Tees Wellbeing Hub.

Open in July 2024 and based in Wellington Square, the Wellbeing Hub was a one-stop shop for advice, guidance and support relating to any wellbeing issues, and brought together a range of expertise and organisations under one roof, making it easier for people to access local help and support. Now the Hub had become established, an approach was made to Catalyst (a charity which acted as the overarching body to further the impact, reputation and opportunities of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector within the Borough, and which led on the Hub project) for an update on its achievements since opening. Presented by the Wellbeing Hub Project Manager, the following information was provided:

- Introduction: In 2021, NHS England funding was secured to initiate community mental health transformation for Tees Valley, with a focus on people being able to access provision within their communities rather than just via clinical settings. Healthwatch led and supported feedback from local communities for the infrastructure of mental health services (2021), with recommendations presented for Stockton's community mental health transformation. The Stockton Lived Experience Forum voice (facilitated by local community organisations Red Balloons and Starfish Health and Wellbeing) in designing services had been, and continued to be, critical to the community transformation work.
- Wellbeing Hub Official Opening – July 2024: Whilst the preference was to have opened sooner, the July 2024 launch ensured the required arrangements were in place from the beginning. Involving a number of organisations, key partners included Catalyst, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) (a SBC adult mental health worker was present every morning), Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), Impact on Teesside, and Stockton and District Advice and Information Service (SDAIS), with the Hub enabling walk-in access to information on available mental health and wellbeing services, signposting to further opportunities for help, and pre-booked appointments with a range of support providers. Nothing was done without a person's consent (unless there was an identified safeguarding issue), and there was a clear sense that people were leaving the building feeling better / more upbeat about their future options.
- Measuring Success / Data: Reporting to the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) on a quarterly basis, the Hub used both qualitative and quantitative methods to ascertain performance – this included footfall data, case studies, impact assessments, and evaluations on the overarching offer (it was noted that this would be further enhanced through the forthcoming work of an intern from Teesside University, a development which may help in securing future resources). Statistics showed that the Hub had seen 1,660 walk-ins (including referrals in), with the main themes for attending being mental health (557), housing (201), bereavement (85), and drugs and alcohol (77). Activity attendance was growing monthly, mainly thanks to Public Health small grants funding and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector offering services onsite without cost.
- Case Stories: Examples were provided of people who had accessed the Hub, accompanied by quotes from the individuals themselves on their positive experience of the offer. A selection of comments from partners working onsite were also included, emphasising the friendly and welcoming environment and the benefits of being co-located with other organisations (aided by robust information-sharing agreements which would shortly be reviewed to ensure relevance and appropriateness).
- Single Referral Form for All Agencies: Badged as a 'Welcome to Services' form (rather than a referral form), this document had deliberately been designed to involve a simple format (in contrast to more clinical referral forms which could be time-consuming to complete) that only required basic personal information, along with a brief overview of the reasons for accessing the Hub, who the individual was currently engaging with / seeing regularly, and what they would like to achieve by coming to the Hub.

- Providers: Seven providers enabling greater capacity of the VCSE sector to support those requiring mental health services and who formed part of the formal partnership were highlighted – Starfish Services Limited, Daisy Chain, Knockout Depression, JoVivi Consultancy and Coaching, Teesside Lupus Support Group, A Way Out, and Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation. It was recognised that not everyone was able to travel into central Stockton to access the Hub – these services therefore worked to offer increased support within the wider community.
- Become a Volunteer – Make a Difference: Opportunities for individuals to become volunteers at the Hub were promoted, with a volunteer’s story included to demonstrate the personal benefits from undertaking this role. Further information was available via the Stockton Volunteers website.

Giving thanks for the presentation and the encouraging partnership-working that was a clear cornerstone of the Hub’s offer, the Committee praised the Wellbeing Hub Project Manager for leading this initiative with such enthusiasm, and for her ongoing efforts in delivering positive outcomes for those seeking support.

With regard the partners involved, clarity was sought on the work of PCP (Pioneering Care Partnership) – Members were subsequently informed that this organisation provided a diabetes peer support group, and that efforts were being made to expand the PCP offer within the Hub. Following a further Committee query, it was confirmed that Citizens Advice Bureau (known locally as the Stockton and District Advice and Information Service (SDAIS)) was still involved (as a co-located partner), though it was noted that its provision was usually appointment-only rather than accessible via walk-in – it was also acknowledged that the Hub and SDAIS needed to strengthen information-sharing in relation to the number of referrals they made to each other.

Continuing the discussion around partners, the Committee heard that there was initial caution about bringing so many organisations together who likely had differing ways of working. However, assurance was given that no issues had been encountered with or between those entities located at the Hub. It was also emphasised that the Hub was not a crisis service, but that risk was appropriately managed where necessary (people could be very unwell when walking in).

The Committee asked if people from outside the Borough were accessing the Hub in central Stockton and were notified that there had been six ‘out-of-area’ walk-ins recorded since opening in July 2024. Whilst no-one would be turned away, the vision was for individuals to be supported to get help more locally to them. Members also heard that, although the current offer was for adults (18+), a handful of under-18s had approached the Hub and had been signposted accordingly – the anticipated development of a young people pathway would also help ensure this cohort were directed to available support in a timely and effective manner.

Concluding this item, the Committee commended efforts to explore further avenues for funding, particularly given existing finance streams may dry up. Assurance was given that, as a result of support from the NENC ICB, the Hub would be maintained until at least March 2027, with a stated commitment for another 12 months taking this to March 2028. There was also a desire to put forward joint funding bids with partners in order to safeguard, and build on, the current offer.

AGREED that the information provided in relation to the Stockton-on-Tees Wellbeing Hub be noted.

## **ASCH/5/26 Action Plan for Agreed Recommendations - Review of Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service**

Presented by the relevant Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Service Manager, consideration was given to a draft Action Plan setting out how the agreed recommendations from the recently concluded review of Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service would be implemented, including success measures and target dates for completion.

Approving its content, the Committee emphasised the importance of the work on strengthening the SBC 'front door' which would play a vital role in the achievement of the Action Plan. Members drew further attention to the following:

- Recommendation 1 (In terms of general Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service development, SBC should:
  - c) Consider ways to increase the response rate for its annual carers consultation survey: Clarity was sought on when SBC conducted its annual survey (SBC officers confirmed that this was usually undertaken during April / May each year), and a request was made that the latest results were fed back to the Committee.
- Recommendation 2 (Regarding the partnership with Mobilise (the UKs digital platform for unpaid carers), SBC should:
  - a) Develop its own in-house digital support offer for local carers to build on / complement the services available through this external provider: SBC officers were asked if work regarding this recommendation had started yet and informed the Committee that this was included within the ongoing 'front door' developments.

It was noted that 'recommendation 5' was not one of the Committee's eight recommendations for this review, but was instead an action associated with wider work in relation to carers assessments. Recommendation 7 (The new carers awareness e-learning module be rolled out to SBC staff, Members and external partners) should therefore have been listed as recommendation 6, with the Committee adding that a reference to training being delivered to Members (as well as SBC staff and external partners) should also be incorporated within both the 'proposed actions / progress' and 'success measures' columns.

AGREED that the Action Plan in relation to the recently completed Scrutiny Review of Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service be approved.

## **ASCH/6/26 Overview Report: SBC Adults, Health & Wellbeing**

The Committee received an overview report from the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Adults, Health and Wellbeing directorate which provided details of key achievements and challenges in 2025-2026 for the Adult Social Care and Strategy & Transformation departments, as well as any emerging issues within these areas of Council activity.

Prior to the report being presented, some context around this item was outlined. In 2025, to facilitate the important overview function of scrutiny committees and provide

the opportunity to hold SBC Cabinet Members and services to account, a decision was made to resume overview and performance reporting to the Council's Select Committees (it was noted that the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee last considered an overview report in July 2023). It was agreed that this should take place twice-yearly.

Although the reporting of performance measures would not commence until September / October 2026, officers from the SBC Strategic Planning Team were in attendance to briefly outline how future performance information would be presented. With work ongoing in relation to finalising key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to the Stockton-on-Tees Plan, reporting would involve the relaying of 'tier 1' (Council outcomes) measures bi-annually to Cabinet and annually to the Executive Scrutiny Committee and Full Council, with 'tier 2' (service outcomes and progress update, including data that supports SBC strategies / plans) measures being submitted bi-annually to the five Select Committees.

Regarding the referenced SBC strategies / plans, the Committee asked if Members could have access to these in paper format (e.g. copies provided within political group offices) – officers agreed to take this up with the SBC Head of Policy, Development and Public Affairs after the meeting. The Committee also encouraged the retention of a consistent colour scheme for the proposed 'progress quadrant' when future performance-related information was provided.

The overview-only report that had been prepared for this meeting (supplemented by presentation slides) was then summarised by the SBC Director of Adults, Health and Wellbeing (supported by the SBC Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care and the SBC Assistant Director – Adult Social Care who were also in attendance).  
Headline information included:

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Care Quality Commission (CQC) 'Good' rating (awarded in October 2025 for SBC adult social care services)
- 15% increase in people coming to the front door
- 10,840 care assessments completed
- 844 direct payments delivered
- 855 carers assessments completed
- 91% care homes rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'
- 72% of domiciliary care rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'

With regards the stated ambition of achieving 'Outstanding' in the next CQC inspection of SBC adult social care services, the Committee sought clarity on comments in relation to the Council '*waiting on indications from the baseline exercise which is nationally complete to understand what the future programmes look like*' (paragraph 1). It was explained that, like other Local Authorities, SBC was awaiting the outcome of several CQC reports reflecting on the adult social care inspection process thus far, and that further national guidance was anticipated. Members looked forward to seeing adult social care data at future meetings, as well as being able to shape what performance information was provided to the Committee for scrutiny.

In terms of the quality of wider adult social care provision (paragraph 7), the Committee was informed that a significant number of settings across the Borough still

needed to be inspected by the CQC – this was likely to be aided by its recent move to a more localised inspection team.

## CHALLENGES

- Increase in demand for mental health and learning disability placements
- Support for working age adults is increasing up 59% in the Borough
- We have more work to do on our front door – we want to simplify and streamline, improving access
- People accessing reablement is up by 10% and we need to continue to ensure we have a strong reablement offer
- Getting people 'Home First' is a priority – we want more people being safely discharged home
- Partner restructure and pressures remain a system challenge – we need to maintain strong partnerships for residents
- Cost of living, financial pressures, global events

SBC was trying to ascertain the reasons for the increase in mental health and learning disability service demand (paragraph 10), and felt there was a clear need to be more 'preventative' around how the population was supported. The Committee questioned if the raising of the pensionable age was a factor in more requests for care from working age adults being received – officers acknowledged that this may be a reason, though also pointed to life expectancy going down, the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic, and people living longer with co-morbidities (Barnet Council's 'graph of doom', illustrating how rising statutory care costs and constrained Council income could eliminate funding for discretionary services, was also referenced).

Regarding the local reablement offer (paragraph 12), this had been broadened so more people could benefit, though this had impacted upon performance (more individuals still required assistance after the reablement period had concluded). That said, the service was still very strong and effective, with efforts being made to integrate the offer more closely with health partners.

Discussion turned to hospital discharge (paragraph 13), with officers noting that the Borough performed well in comparison to the wider region, but that there was a desire to get closer to national levels in terms of the number of people being discharged to their own homes (where possible) rather than into bed-based support. Members recognised that this was a crucial area of focus and encouraged the provision of numbers as well as percentages when submitting performance data.

Continuing the theme of coming out of hospital, the Committee queried why the region seemingly had a greater tendency to place individuals in beds (instead of back home) when they were deemed fit to leave hospital. Several possible reasons were relayed, including organisational risk-aversion, a greater proportion of poorly people within the North East area, the NHS still being prescriptive (work was needed around the conversations professionals were having with patients), and that it was generally cheaper to use care services locally / regionally than in other parts of the country.

In relation to the new requirement to publish a supported housing strategy in 2027 (paragraph 18), the Committee expressed hope that this would link in with the emerging Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan. Members were subsequently assured that a SBC Strategic Housing Officer would engage with the Committee regarding the development of this now statutory strategy.

## EMERGING ISSUES

- Neighbourhood Health
- New Adult Social Care Strategy
- Developing All-Age Carer Strategy
- New Legislation Changes
- Co-production – we need to do more!
- Finances remain challenging
- Casey Commission

Further to the stated ambition for co-production at all levels within the Local Authority (paragraph 23), the Committee asked whether there was a greater role for the Making It Real Board (MIRB) in this regard. In response, whilst acknowledging the positive impact of the MIRB, officers felt this pursuit went beyond the involvement of a single group, with increased community engagement required across all areas of Council activity to understand a greater range of public views (in particular, those voices that were seldom heard).

Bringing this item to a close, the Committee gave thanks for the information provided and looked forward to the next update (inclusive of performance data) later in 2026, a key part of which should highlight developments in relation to the 'neighbourhood health' initiative.

AGREED that the Overview Report: SBC Adults, Health and Wellbeing be noted.

## **ASCH/7/26 Regional Health Scrutiny Update**

Consideration was given to the latest Regional Health Scrutiny Update report which summarised the work of regional health scrutiny committees and highlighted some recent health-related developments impacting on the Tees Valley and / or wider North East and North Cumbria footprint. Attention was drawn to the following:

- Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee: Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council hosted the Committee in 2025-2026. Two meetings had taken place since the last published update, the first being held on 11 December 2025 where agenda items included a key clinical services strategy update from the University Hospitals Tees (UHT), another Tees respite care / adult learning disability update, a presentation on the development and implementation of the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) palliative and end-of-life care strategy, and a health inequalities update.

The most recent meeting took place on 12 March 2026 and included Quality Account presentations from both North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (NEAS) and Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV). TEWV also provided an urgent care mental health crisis update.

As per previously agreed rotational arrangements, Chair and support responsibilities for this joint committee would move to Middlesbrough Council for 2026-2027. The first meeting date of the new municipal year was yet to be confirmed.

Reference was once again made to Member attendance at the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee, with ongoing absences from some of the appointed

representatives from other Local Authorities highlighted (it was noted that attendance by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) representatives continued to be strong). Concerns were also raised around the University Hospitals Tees (UHT) developments and the very recent reports of job losses across the two NHS Trusts (North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, and South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) within the UHT footprint.

- Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) / Integrated Care System (ICS) Joint Health Scrutiny Committee: No further developments regarding this Joint Committee since the previous update in December 2025. In related matters, regional developments highlighted included the ongoing promotion of the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) 'Here to help you' webpage, the extension of efforts to help people in the North East and North Cumbria tackle health problems and stay in work, new premises for a learning disability respite service that faced years of uncertainty, and the high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the North East. At a more local level, attention was drawn to recent North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT) news items regarding the reaccreditation of its Teesside endoscopy service, a new initiative to help patients who may be deteriorating, and a new fast and easy system for feedback for new mums and mums-to-be.

AGREED that the Regional Health Scrutiny Update report be noted.

**ASCH/8/26 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2026-2027**

CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair had no further updates.

WORK PROGRAMME 2026-2027

Consideration was given to the Committee's current work programme. The next meeting was due to take place on 19 May 2026 where the annual North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT) Quality Account presentation would be received, along with the latest progress update in relation to the Committee's previously completed Access to GPs and Primary Medical Care review. Members were also informed of the recent confirmation of the Committee's next in-depth review topic (Protection of Property) – a draft scope for this piece of work would be presented at either the May or June 2026 meeting.

AGREED that the Chair's Update and Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee Work Programme 2026-2027 be noted.

Chair: .....