



South Tyneside Council

item 2

Adult Safeguarding, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
16 June 2026

Adult Safeguarding, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Minutes

17 March 2026

Present: Councillors McCabe (Chair), Gynn, Hamilton, Keegan, Kennedy, Lamonte, K Maxwell, Myers, Porthouse, Stonehouse, Traynor, Wood.

Also in attendance: Councillor Berkley (Lead Member for Adults, Health and Independence)

Norma Thompson (Independent Scrutiny Representative), Russell Patton (Deputy Chief Operating Officer, CNTW NHS Foundation Trust), Andrew McMinn (Group Director, Specialist Care Group, CNTW NHS Foundation Trust), Joanne Tuart (Associate Director, CNTW NHS Foundation Trust), Nicola Price (Principal Social Worker), Dionne Armitage (Workforce Lead Manager), Jonathan Lunness (Scrutiny and Democracy Support Officer), and Kelly Ellwood (Democracy Support Officer).

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 3 February 2026

Agreed: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a true and accurate record.

3. Rose Lodge and Learning Disability Provision Engagement

Members were given a presentation on future provision of specialist learning disability inpatient services following the recent temporary closure of Rose Lodge.

It was explained that national policy drivers had prioritised shifting learning disability care into community-based and mainstream mental health services. Local strategies also aimed to reduce the number of people with a learning disability receiving hospital-based care.

It was noted that CNTW had historically operated two learning disability inpatient assessment and treatment units, Edenwood in Carlisle, and Rose Lodge in Hebburn, 10-bed specialist unit.

Rose Lodge temporarily closed in November 2025 after the safe discharge/transfer of the remaining patients. This closure was extended to October 2026 to enable a comprehensive engagement process on the long-term future of learning disability and autism services. The temporary closure enabled resources to be reinvested into a new model, the Learning Disability In-Reach and Transitions Team (LDITT).

Some figures were included in the presentation to highlight current levels of need, demonstrating a dispersed need across mainstream settings rather than concentrated demand for a standalone learning disability unit. There had been reduced demand for inpatient beds driven by stronger community provision and improved partnership working.

On future options, the Trust sought views on several possible long-term scenarios outlined within the presentation. These were:

- Two small specialist units on main hospital sites
- One specialist unit co-located with autism services (Morpeth)
- Specialist community provision only (independent living model)

A broad engagement process was underway with stakeholders, including service users, carers, families, advocates, staff and the ICB, with feedback to determine whether a formal consultation would be required.

Members raised concerns about patients needing to travel further for care. It was confirmed that geography had been considered, and that a tailored travel offer would be put in place. However, it was also acknowledged that specialist care required a highly skilled workforce and appropriate environments, meaning services could not be delivered everywhere.

It was queried how people would access the service under the new arrangements. It was explained that access would continue through secondary care: referrals would be made via GPs, followed by assessment. Most people would not require an inpatient bed, but if their needs changed, they would be referred to the appropriate bed-based service.

Agreed: That the update be noted.

The Chair at this point moved forward item 5 Chair's Urgent Items.

The Chair thanked everyone for their support and contributions over the year. The Lead Member commended the Chair for his enthusiasm and commitment to a complex portfolio.

Councillor McCabe vacated the chair.

Councillor Lamonte took the chair.

4. Adult Social Care and Commissioning Workforce Strategy

Members received a report outlining the Adult Social Care and Commissioning (ASC&C) Workforce Strategy 2025-2028 and the associated Workforce Priorities and delivery plan.

The strategy set out how ASC&C would support, develop and grow a resilient and sustainable workforce to deliver the ambitions of Living Better Lives. It was noted that the strategy outlined six strategic workforce priorities:

- Staff recognition, value and reward
- Investment in training, qualification and support
- Career pathways and development
- Social justice, equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging
- Effective workforce planning across the whole social care workforce
- Expansion of the workforce in co-produced roles and innovative models of support.

Members were informed that these priorities were supported by a three-phase delivery plan, with clear actions and measurable outcomes. Progress would be reviewed annually and improvements were planned around internal communications and staff recognition.

On recruitment, it was explained that the Council would continue to build relationships with universities and make greater use of apprenticeships to help “grow our own” workforce.

The importance of career pathways was discussed, with officers explaining that the strategy linked to national approaches and set out the training and support needed at each stage. Annual reviews and regular manager check-ins were described as vital to staff development.

In response to questions about recruitment and retention challenges, it was acknowledged that these were both regional and national issues, and while agency staff were used, the aim was to minimise this where possible. There was strong competition for a small pool of skilled workers, and recruitment campaigns regularly targeted universities. Members were also informed that some training opportunities could be converted into apprenticeships to make better use of the government levy.

A Member asked about support for staff experiencing burnout. It was confirmed that wellbeing support was in place, including counselling services, and supervision including welfare check-ins. Career breaks could also be requested and would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Agreed: That (a) the content of the strategy be noted, (b) the associated priorities and delivery plan be noted, and (c) the approach to workforce strategy delivery and monitoring be endorsed.

5. Work Programme 2025/26

This report outlined the Work Programme for the municipal year. It was stated that the work programme was now complete for the current year, and suggestions were encouraged for 2026-27.

Agreed: That the completed work programme be noted.

SIGNED _____

Chair xxxx 2026