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**OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Social Affairs and Health Scrutiny Committee has undertaken :-
  - (a) **Health Scrutiny Training** – As part of the Centre for Public Scrutiny’s Health Scrutiny Support Programme, every local authority with health scrutiny powers was entitled to receive up to five days complimentary training and support this year, to address their chosen development areas. Members chose to look at effective questioning in relation to the issue of Foundation Trusts; process mapping and relationship building with our partner NHS organisations; and performance assessment through the new Annual Health Check process for NHS Trusts. It was pleasing that a number of colleagues from other Scrutiny Committees joined these sessions, enabling us to make best use of the support.
  - (b) **Work Programme 2006/07** – We have considered our Work Programme and possible Review topics for the Municipal Year 2006/07 and following consideration of the Choosing Health and Our Health, Our Care, Our Say White Papers in relation to local issues, have decided to focus on the area of mental health and well-being. Members have put forward topic suggestions and a special meeting will be held early in the new Municipal Year to finalise the topic and scope the Review in more detail.
  - (c) **NHS Annual Health Checks – Scrutiny Contribution** – Over the past few months we have been involved in the new performance assessment process of NHS Trusts and have finalised our comments in relation to the Scrutiny Committee’s findings and the Healthcare Commission’s 24 core standards. Following a training session in April on the Annual Health Check, Members have proposed some ideas to improve the future process and we will work on these improvements over the coming year.
  - (d) **Clean Your Hands Campaign for Infection Control** – The Committee continues to monitor the issue of infection control in health care settings in Darlington. The Acute Trust in particular, has fully implemented the ‘cleanyourhands’ campaign through placing alcohol gel at the point of patient care in conjunction with a large awareness raising campaign and education programme. A three-month pilot of a further programme to reduce infection rates, called ‘Saving Lives’ is underway and the Committee will be kept updated on its progress.
  - (e) **Development of a Breastfeeding Strategy for Darlington** – The Director of Public Health has updated Members on the progress being made following the Committee’s recent recommendations to make Darlington: A Breastfeeding Friendly Town. It is hoped that a finalised action plan will be launched during this year’s National Breastfeeding Awareness Week from 15th to 19th May, 2006.

- (f) **Employment Opportunities for People with a Learning Disability Task and Finish Review Group – Final Report** – Following the work of Councillors Richmond and Flowers in this area, the Committee agreed the recommendations of this Group. A letter will now be targeted at employers in Darlington with 20 or more employees and highlighting the work of the Advance Employment Project and outlining the business case for supporting people with learning disabilities.
- (g) **CRB Checks in the NHS Task and Finish Review Group – Final Report** – This Group has made a number of recommendations to the four NHS Trusts involved and in line with the Committee’s health scrutiny powers, is awaiting responses by 19th May, 2006. The Group will then reconvene to finalise its report.
- (h) **County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals NHS Trust – Foundation Trust Application** – Following the briefing held on 28th April for all Members on the Acute Trust’s Foundation Trust proposals, it was agreed that this Scrutiny Committee would consider the membership and governance issues of the Trust further. A special meeting was held on 8th May at which a response to the consultation was discussed and will be submitted by the 26th May deadline.

**Councillor Mrs. Marian Swift**  
**Chair of the Social Affairs and Health Scrutiny Committee**