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**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

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**Introduction**

1. After another busy year, I am pleased to present this annual report to Council on behalf of the Social Affairs and Health Scrutiny Committee and would personally like to thank the Vice-Chair and other Members on the Committee for their ongoing support and commitment throughout this Municipal Year. I would also like to thank Councillor Bryan Thistlethwaite, Cabinet Member for Adult Services for his contributions to our meetings and his support this year.
2. This year saw the conclusion of Darlington's first health scrutiny review on Breastfeeding and the completion of the Year 1 Health Scrutiny Action Learning Projects across the Country. I am sure that my colleagues on the Review Group would agree, that all the hard work has been rewarded with the opportunity to showcase our experiences and learning at numerous events across the Country and raise the profile of Darlington on a national level.
3. Many people have contributed to the success of this Review but in particular, I would like to thank David Plews in the Chief Executive's Office; Nonnie Crawford and Jonathan Smith at the PCT; and Steve Rose, Darlington Partnership for their valued support in completing this piece of work.

**A Time of Change**

4. This year has seen an increasing number of consultations for change across the NHS including the merger of local Mental Health Trusts; Darzi's review of Acute Services across Teesside; and proposals to reconfigure the Strategic Health Authority, local PCT and Ambulance Service. We have held discussions with the Chief Executives of these organisations and contributed our views on the implications and best solutions for the people of Darlington.
5. In terms of local service provision, we have supported the PCT's plans to consult on the re-provision of services currently provided at the Greenbank Unit and will consider the results of this early in the new Municipal Year.
6. With our colleagues on the Public Protection and Community Partnerships Scrutiny Committee (PPCP) we have examined the crosscutting issue of tobacco control and supported the establishment of a Smoke Free Partnership as part of Darlington's response to the consultation on the Health Improvement and Protection Bill.

## **Assessment for Improvement – The Annual Health Check**

7. As part of new performance management arrangements across the NHS, the Committee has for the first time engaged in the self-assessment process for each local NHS Trust and has provided a ‘reality check’ on Trust performance across 24 core standards.
8. This has been a time consuming exercise and a steep learning curve for all involved but we hope through refining our processes and undertaking further training that we will have a meaningful impact on this and future assessments.

## **Task and Finish Review Groups**

9. We have undertaken four very different Task and Finish Reviews this year and I would like to thank Councillors Copeland, Flowers, Nutt, Reynolds, Richmond and Mrs. Scott for their continual involvement and commitment to these Reviews.
10. Having investigated the problem of obesity in children in Darlington a number of issues were highlighted for further review. However, due to the amount of work currently being undertaken to address obesity across partner agencies, it was decided to re-visit this issue at a later date to avoid duplication of effort.
11. In building on the existing partnership between the Council and the Morrison Enterprise Trust, a Task and Finish Review Group have looked at ways to maximise employment opportunities for approximately 50 people with a learning disability who are looking for gainful employment and support in Darlington.
12. The statutory background and local factors which have led to the review of the Council’s policy in respect of tenancy succession where tenants have been viewed as ‘over occupying’ Council accommodation has also been examined and supported.
13. Most recently and following an issue highlighted through the Committee’s contribution to the NHS Trusts’ Annual Health Checks, a small group has looked at the Trusts’ policies and procedures for undertaking CRB Checks for staff and has made some comparisons and recommendations for improvement.

## **Health Scrutiny Training**

14. As part of the Centre for Public Scrutiny’s Health Scrutiny Support Programme, we have taken advantage of five days complimentary training and support for health scrutiny and have held sessions on effective questioning and relationship building, which have been facilitated by a Non-Executive Director of East Leeds Mental Health Trust and open to all Members of the Council.

## **Looking Ahead**

15. We have used the progress in Darlington in relation to the *Choosing Health* agenda and the latest White Paper *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say – A New Direction for Community Services* to inform our Review choice and work programme for the coming Municipal Year and will continue to look at ways in which scrutiny can contribute to the vision for Darlington.

16. In the new Municipal Year, Darlington will take up the position of Vice-Chair of the Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Joint Committee and will respond to the Acute Trust's consultation on its application to become a Foundation Trust.
17. A further five days complimentary health scrutiny support will be available from the start of this new financial year and as a Committee we will be considering areas for training and development in rising to the new challenges that will no doubt come our way.

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