
OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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) **Darlington NHS Walk-In Centre – Proposal to Change the Opening Hours** – We have considered and supported the PCT’s proposals to change the opening hours of the Walk-in Centre to 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. every day to reflect patient demand and maximise the use of resources.
 - (b) **Review Groups for the Municipal Year 2006/07** – The Committee’s main review for the coming year will focus on mental health and well being in Darlington. As this is a complex and wide ranging issue, we are holding a special meeting to thoroughly define the scope of this work with the assistance of an advisor from the Health Scrutiny Support Programme.

Four Task and Finish Review Groups will look at the performance of NHS Trusts across the Healthcare Commission’s 24 core standards, whilst two further Task and Finish Review reviews will examine the implications of the new legislation in relation to smoking in public places on the communal areas of the Council’s warden controlled premises and how residents in Darlington are made aware of the symptoms of stroke.
 - (c) **Independent Review of Haematology and Chemotherapy Services across County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals NHS Trust 2006** – The Medical Director of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Strategic Health Authority presented the findings of his review of haematology and chemotherapy services across the Acute Trust to Members. His recommendation is to centralise inpatient services currently based at Darlington Memorial Hospital and University Hospital North Durham to Bishop Auckland General Hospital. Whilst the PCT supports this recommendation, we are arranging to meet with our colleagues on Durham County Council’s Health Scrutiny Committee to investigate some areas in more detail and intend to submit our views to the Trust prior to the Trust Board’s decision on this matter.
 - (d) **Infection Control – Saving Lives Programme** – We continue to monitor infection control and recently received an update on the Acute Trust’s implementation of the Department of Health’s Saving Lives Programme, which provides additional tools and techniques to reduce hospital acquired infections. The first quarterly analysis of audits will be available shortly for Members to consider.
 - (e) **Greenbank Unit – Outcome of Consultation on Future Provision of Services** – Members were pleased with the process and outcomes of the consultation with staff, carers and families regarding the re-provision of services currently provided at the Greenbank Unit. Respite care facilities will now be provided at Newton Lane and

Members of the Committee have arranged to visit these facilities on 11th October 2006.

- (f) **St John's Mental Health Respite Beds – Proposals to Negotiation on the Future Re-provision of Service** – The Committee's views were invited from the PCT and Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust on a proposal to negotiate on the future provision of respite care at St John's Mental Health Care Home with a view to releasing funding to provide additional community support for the new flexible and responsive respite service at West Park. We have supported this proposal and will receive a further report once the negotiations have concluded.
- (g) **Stroke Services in Darlington** – We have expressed a number concern over plans, which from 1st September 2006 would see all patients in Darlington presenting to emergency services with symptoms of stroke being directed to a specialist stroke unit at Bishop Auckland General Hospital. We have requested further information on transport provision and rehabilitation services and will be holding a special meeting to consider this issue and the business plan for the Acute Trust in more detail.
- (h) **Children and Young People's Plan** – Members welcomed the co-ordinated approach of the Children's and Young People's Plan which replaces the plethora of other statutory and non-statutory plans and considered the 'Being Healthy' element of the Plan and its associated priorities, actions and performance measures.
- (i) **Department of Health –Proposed Regulations relating to Smoke Free Premises and Vehicles and Underage Sale of Tobacco – Consultation** - A joint special meeting was held with the Public Protection and Community Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 22nd August, 2006 to consider the Council's response to these two important Department of Health consultations.

Members considered the resource implications for the Council in terms of enforcing the changes in legislation; received an overview of the impact of smoking on health, in particular the deaths attributable to workplace exposure to second hand smoke; and discussed the potential increased demand for smoking cessation services.

Members welcomed the proposed smoke free premises and vehicles legislation and the Joint Committee gave its support to raising the minimum age for the sale of tobacco products to 18.

- (j) **Smoke Free Darlington Action Plan** – We also received a revised version of the Smoke Free Darlington Action Plan following its development since our last joint meeting in September 2005.
- (k) **Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee** – Councillor Copeland represented the Committee at an event hosted by Middlesbrough Council to examine the implications of the Our Health, Our Care, Our Say White Paper on the future of services across the Tees Valley health. This debate will be used to inform a Tees Valley wide Scrutiny Review over the coming months.

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