
OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken by the Social Affairs and Health Scrutiny Committee: -
 - (a) **Clean Hands Help to Save Lives** – Laura Robson, Director of Nursing and Joanne Todd, Infection Control, County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals NHS Trust attended our recent meeting to advise us of their preparations for the National Patient Safety Agency Alert No 04 “clean hands help to save lives”. It is pleasing to report that the Trust has been accepted onto the latest phase of the campaign, which will involve strategically placing alcohol gel across hospital sites and raising awareness of the importance of clean hands across staff and visitors in reducing hospital borne infection, in particular, Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA). From pilot sites elsewhere in the Country the number of staff observed cleaning their hands between each patient has risen from 28% and 76% and we look forward to monitoring the progress of this initiative in Darlington.
 - (b) **Darlington PCT – Annual Report** – We received a comprehensive and informative report from Colin Morris, Chief Executive, Darlington PCT, on its activities during the past year, in particular the progress that has been made in renewing/refurbishing its estate. This Committee will be informed and consulted on the planning cycle for the next 3 years.
 - (c) **Social Services Annual Performance Review and Delivery and Improvement Statement** – Following a presentation on the Annual Review and Delivery Improvement Statement, we were pleased to congratulate Margaret Asquith and her team on the progress and improvements made over the past year. We were particularly pleased to note that the waiting list for an Occupational Therapist had been eliminated, but understand that this brings with it its own challenges. We await the announcement of the Social Services Department Star Ratings with interest.
 - (d) **Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice in Rented Housing – BVPI 164** – We have received details of the seven racial incidents reported and upheld within the last six months and the action taken to support the victims against the perpetrators.
 - (e) **Disabled Facilities Grant** – We have commented on the current budgetary pressures in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and adaptations to Council dwellings, and the options available to the Council in dealing with this situation. Our comments will be incorporated into the report considered by Cabinet on 16th November, 2004, and we have asked to look at this issue again six months to review progress.
 - (f) **Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy** – Following our comments on the draft Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, we hope that these will be included in the

final strategy and look forward to updates on the implementation of the Action Plan both as a Committee and in our individual community representative roles.

- (g) **Children's Trust Operational Plan – Half Yearly Update** – The Committee received a half-yearly update on the progress of Darlington's Children's Pathfinder Trust and was pleased to note its success in becoming one of the Early Support Programme pilots with funding of £150,000 up to March 2006, aimed at the youngest disabled children and the encouragement of services which are family centred.

- (h) **Darlington: A Breastfeeding Friendly Town** – Following my attendance at a workshop with the Manchester Centre for Healthcare Management, it was interesting to meet representatives from the other 8 successful action learning projects in the Country and discuss our approaches to Scrutiny. A framework has been developed through which our learning will be fed back to the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and we look forward to our forthcoming scoping exercise on 1st December, 2004.

- (i) **Transport Review Group** – The Health Group were recently made aware of the existence of a Transport for Health Partnership which has been established by agencies across County Durham and Darlington to look at this issue across a wider remit. Following a meeting with representatives of the Partnership, we have decided to put our Health Transport Review on hold to avoid duplication of effort, with the proviso that the Group be kept up-to-date on its progress. The Social Care Group will continue to examine the services provided by the Social Services Department to social care settings.

Councillor Mrs. Swift
Chair Social Affairs and Health Scrutiny Committee