

# DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**At a Meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee to Promote Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities** held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 7 June 2004** at **10.00 a.m.**

**Present:**

**Councillor Mrs E Hunter** in the Chair

### **Members of the Sub-committee:**

Councillors Armstrong, Barker, Blenkinsopp, Coates, Cordon, Douthwaite, Howarth, Maddison, O'Donnell and Stradling.

### **Other Members:**

Councillors Dormer, Firby, Hogan and Pye.

### **Cabinet Members:**

Councillors Myers and Smith.

### **Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Nicholls, T Forster, Priestley, Rodgers and Wright.

### **1 Illness of Chairman**

Councillor Mrs Hunter informed the Sub-Committee that Councillor Nicholls, the Chairman, was currently in hospital. However, he was improving and members would be kept up-to-date with his progress.

### **2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **3 Presentation by Councillor Smith, Older Persons' Champion**

The Sub-Committee considered a report and presentation by Councillor Smith, Older Persons' Champion, updating members about the progress in relation to older people over the last 12 months. (For copy see File of Minutes).

In addition, Councillor Smith circulated a document from Age Concern entitled 'Aging Well, Adding Years to Life'. (For copy see File of Minutes).

During the presentation Councillor Smith highlighted the following issues :-

- Older people will represent a greater proportion of the population over the next decade and therefore will be more politically active, assertive and economically influential.
- The challenges of an ageing population focusing primarily upon Social Care and Health and the NHS, in reality, it offers significant opportunities to engage the whole of the County Council, all of the District Councils, the Department of Works and Pensions, public and independent sector providers, voluntary organisations and, of course, older people themselves.
- There is a need for all organisations to be able to respond rapidly to the changing needs of older people.
- The traditional ways of meeting these needs will no longer be acceptable as older people become more discerning consumers.
- A need for a strategic approach to all services which older people use, including housing, leisure, pensions and transport as well as health and social care services.
- Recent developments within Social Care and Health to improve Services include:-
  - The development of 7 Extra Care Schemes which won a national Health and Social Care award.
  - The involvement of older people and their carers through a Service Level Agreement with Age Concern.
  - The development of 5 local Partnership Boards designed to integrate services for older people and adults across Social Care and Health, PCTs and District Councils.
  - Significant reductions in delayed discharges.

- Overall good performance in adult social care services and improving performance in relation to some indicators, e.g. C32 (Older People Helped to Live at Home) is now in the green banding.
  - The development of intermediate care beds in County Durham Care homes.
  - Increasing take up of Direct Payments.
  - The implementation of Social Care Direct as a single access point.
  - The recent refocus of the multi-agency group driving the NSF into a new Modernisation Group.
- More work needs to be done in relation to Adult Protection. Procedures have been drawn up for the protection of vulnerable adults with a multi-agency Adult Protection Committee meeting on a regular basis. In addition, training has been given to staff in handling abuse cases.
  - The challenge is for local authorities to help keep older people healthier and active within the community.
  - A lot of work is currently done by Cultural Services. However, older people have a stake in most of the services currently provided by the County Council.

Councillor E Hunter congratulated Councillor Smith on the content of the report and the effort which had gone into producing the report. She asked if there were any milestones for the eight standards in the National Service Framework for Older People which have not yet been met?

Councillor Smith responded that a previous report had been submitted to the Sub-Committee identifying as to how far the authority currently is in relation to fulfilling the various milestones. However, information would be provided later to update the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Hunter referred to one of the standards about rooting out age discrimination. Was the Authority satisfied that the County Council provides all its services irrespective of people's age?

Councillor Smith responded that routing out age discrimination is of major importance to the Authority with all possible steps being taken to ensure that age discrimination does not happen. A more detailed response would be supplied to members of the Sub-Committee in due course.

Councillor Hogan commented that in relation to older people and keeping fit, staff within leisure centres sometimes do not have the capacity to help older people. In addition, he highlighted that many older people do not have the funds to make use of leisure centres and gymnasiums.

Marion Usher, Divisional Commissioning Manager for Audit Services informed the Sub-Committee that within the Sedgefield area, GPs provide an exercise scheme by prescription. She continued by commenting that leisure centres are not the only facilities to provide exercise and referred members to the Age Concern document that had been circulated which provides information on various exercise schemes geared towards older people, which are available within County Durham.

Councillor Dormer commented that the Authority does not publicise its achievements in relation to care of the elderly.

Councillor Smith responded that a letter had recently been sent to the Health Minister inviting him to visit Durham to look at the various provision available. In addition, the Authority had hosted a conference concerning Extra Care Provision, which had been very successful.

Councillor Barker continued that the Extra Care schemes had been a huge success, with the Authority receiving numerous national awards for its various care initiatives. He highlighted the need for the Authority to publicise its success in relation to this provision.

Councillor Marshall commented that there are differences in provision for exercise on prescription throughout the County and that Easington and Derwentside Districts are currently being examined in relation to existing provision.

Councillor Howarth requested whether physical exercise programmes are provided in the Authority's Extra Care and Residential Homes provision.

Councillor Smith commented that there are various activity programmes provided for residents in the Extra Care schemes and residential homes.

**Resolved:-**

That the report and presentation be noted.

#### **4      Sickness Absence Report**

The Sub-committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny, together with the report from the Scrutiny Working Group concerning Sickness Absence. (For copy see File of Minutes.)

In addition, Tom Bolton, Senior Scrutiny Support Officer, gave a presentation (for copy of slides of presentation see File of Minutes) highlighting the following issues:

- Structure of report
- Sickness Absence Data
- Sickness Absence in Social Care and Health Service
- How we compare
- Conclusions and recommendations
- Social Care and Health
- Corporate
- Review

Peter Appleton continued by informing the Sub-committee of the current figures and information relating to sickness absence.

During the presentation he summarised the figures for 2003/04, as follows:-

- Sickness Absence Rate 2003/04 = 7.4% (02/03 - 8.6%)
- Annual BV12 Figure 2003/04 = 18.97 days per employee (02/03 - 22.43 days)
- Annual savings budget target = £456,000  
     CDC Extra Shift Costs = £16,283  
     Target total = £475,658
- Sickness Absence Rate for April 2004 = 6.6% (April 2003 - 7.3%)
- Priority - targeting long term sick leave
- Reason for Sickness Absence 2003/04 : Musculo Skeletal Absences 29.5%. Depression / Stress Absences 28%
- Firm / Fair Sickness Absence Management
- Push on Improving Health - 'Bronze Award'
- Keep up Momentum on Health & Safety
- Keep this on every agenda!

Councillor Dormer commented that in relation to sickness absence rates the figures for Somerset and Norfolk were very dissimilar and asked if this was due to the various policies of the Councils.

Tom Bolton explained that Middlesbrough and Norfolk Authorities appeared to have a stronger gate-keeping approach to looking at previous sickness absence levels when making staff appointments.

Peter Appleton added that, in relation to statistics, there was a wide variation in rates in the same Authority on a year to year basis. He continued that Somerset had gone from a figure of 8.5% to 12.9% to 2.3%. However, he highlighted that he was comfortable about the reliability of the figures produced by this authority.

Councillor Hogan commented that in relation to Section 12, (Training), staff have commented that training is not always relevant to the working situation. He continued that most training tends to be hospital based and does not replicate the home situation. There was a need to prevent back injuries from occurring. This needs to be pursued.

Tom Bolton reported to staff feedback from a recent PATCH meeting where Home Care workers had identified back injuries as a problem, with a need for training tailored to the actual working arrangements of staff. He continued that this was an issue which will need to be pursued by the Director of Social Care and Health.

Councillor Cordon asked when the 12 month period of sickness absence is reached and the employee cannot meet the terms of their contract of employment, was their employment terminated?

Peter Appleton responded that the Authority no longer waits for the 12 month period to expire before termination is considered. He continued that, as long as all necessary proper adjustments had been made to the working environment of the individual and they are still unable to carry out the duties of the post, then termination can be considered.

Councillor Cordon asked whether the outcome of Capability hearings could be supplied to Members on a regular basis.

Peter Appleton agreed that this information could be made available to members.

Councillor Stradling commented that in relation to Sickness Absence there had been an encouraging reversal of the trend. However, there was a need to continue to monitor Sickness Absence to ensure that the levels continue to fall.

Councillor Coates asked if, in relation to paragraph 12.9, the fourth line could be amended to read 'that there are agreements local and national'. This was agreed.

He continued by asking why the target for savings resulting from sickness absence had changed from £500,000 to a figure of £475,000.

Peter Appleton explained that the £500,000 was the £456,000 plus additional staff costs.

Councillor Marshall commented that in relation to the training of staff perhaps the training used for ambulance personnel would be more appropriate than that currently given.

Peter Appleton agreed that the lifting techniques of ambulance personnel may be more appropriate.

**Resolved:-**

That the recommendation and report be approved, subject to the amendment of paragraph 12.9.

## 5 Aids and Adaptations Review

The Sub-committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny together with the notes of a review meeting in relation to the Aids and Adaptations Service. (For a copy of the report and notes of the review meeting see File of Minutes).

Tom Bolton informed the Sub-Committee that the outcome from the meeting was that members and service users agreed that the Aids and Adaptations Service had developed to such an extent that, rather than a six-monthly review with Service users and carers, it was now suggested that it might now be more appropriate simply to have a regular report to monitor progress.

Councillor Cordon commented that he was currently dealing with a 'live care case' which highlighted that the system was not working as it should, particularly in relation to the time delay currently experienced before individuals are assessed by Occupational Therapists.

Peter Appleton responded that there had been a problem with the filling of vacant Occupational Therapists' posts.

Councillor Blenkinsopp informed the Sub-committee that he was also having problems in relation to a particular case.

Councillor Coates suggested that this issue should be highlighted and investigated by a Scrutiny Group.

Councillor Mrs Hunter suggested that a further report on these issues be provided.

### **Resolved:-**

That the update be noted and the issue raised, relating to the Occupational Therapy Service, be further investigated.

## 6 Valuing People - presentation by I Bennett and K Wilkinson

The Sub-Committee considered a presentation by I Bennett and K Wilkinson from Social Care and Health in relation to Valuing People. (For copy of slides see File of Minutes).

During the presentation the following issues were raised:

- Valuing People
  - A new strategy for learning disabilities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
  - 'Cradle to Grave' approach of better life opportunities for people with learning difficulties.

- Based upon 4 Principles
  - 4 principles
    - Rights
    - Choice
    - Independence
    - Inclusion
  - Human Rights Act 1998
  - Disability Discrimination Act 1995
  - All councils have to:
    - Establish Partnership Boards
    - Develop links with Local Strategic Partnerships
    - Key role in transforming outdated services
    - Targets and performance indicators
    - Strategies to Department of Health
- Day Service Modernisation
  - Key Challenge
    - 6 large centres
    - 500+ places
    - People with high support needs
    - Carers satisfied with current service provision
    - £4m
    - 250 staff
- Moved away from segregated provision
- Derwentside day opportunities (for people with moderate support needs)
- Day Service Modernisation
  - Huge agenda
  - Approach centre by centre basis
  - Involves - service users, carers, community
  - Will be more costly
  - Direct payments
  - Employment
  - Better life opportunities
  - Looking to establish a project team to oversee changes needed
  - Look at what/how we spend money
  - Reassure carers about the change process
  - Work together
  - Listen to people - act upon what they tell us
- Feedback so far :
  - Valuing people - seminars
  - Day Service Modernisation Workshops
  - Task Groups - centre level
  - Protect friendships
  - Respite to carers
  - Needs to include all people with learning disabilities
  - Information and communication
  - Community needs to be more involved
  - New models of support to replace day centres



Councillor Blenkinsopp commented that there was a need for local members to be kept informed of issues within their locality and referred to a newspaper article about the closure of the Oaks Nursing Home.

Ian Bennett responded that work would not start on the closure of the Home for two years, and he was surprised that this particular newspaper article had appeared.

Councillor Mrs Howarth said that a lack of consultation led to anxiety. In addition, there was no local representation on Partnership Boards which needs to be looked at in the future.

Councillor Hogan made reference to the project team and suggested that an elected Member and carer representative be placed on the Team.

Peter Appleton agreed that communication with local Members was essential and suggested that Member Area Panels might be used for this purpose.

Councillor Armstrong commented that as MAPS only met once every 6 weeks and as Members need to be updated frequently, e-mail should be used.

Councillor Mrs Hunter suggested that a further presentation be held in six months to keep Members updated as to the progress made in relation to Valuing People.

Ian Bennett agreed that it would be helpful if Members were provided with dates of future meetings of the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board meetings.

**Resolved :-**

That the presentation be noted.

## **7 Performance Indicators**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Performance Monitoring Manager giving an update on performance information with the year-end results for 2003/04. (For copy see File of Minutes.)

Peter Appleton informed the Sub-Committee that, of the 20 Adult Services indicators that are banded, 1 had reduced banding and 5 had an improved banding from the previous year.

In relation to C29 (Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home) has moved from the yellow to dark green banding and C32 (Older people helped to live at home) has improved from the yellow to the light green banding. The latter is an important PAF indicator in relation to the Star Rating.

In relation to Children Indicators the Sub-committee was informed that 2 indicators have reduced banding and 4 have improved from the previous year.

C23 (Percentage of children looked after who are adopted) has moved from the dark green banding in 2002/03 to the yellow banding in 2003/04. The reason for this is a reduction in the number of children looked after placed for adoption from 8.8% to 6.3%, this equates to 5 less children being adopted from the previous year.

Councillor Coates commented that it was good to see a general improvement. However, he was disappointed that indicators 52 (users satisfied with Social Services) and 53 (users who asked for changes to services who were satisfied with those changes) had not been reported although he recognised that indicator 57 covered the same issues as this. He continued by questioning as to what is being learnt from D57, i.e. 70% of users' opinions and preferences were not taken into account. In relation to E47 he questioned as to whether the banding was a result of the travelling community being taken into account.

Peter Appleton responded that D57 is a new indicator this year and that other local authorities were recording around a 30% figure for satisfaction. With reference to E47, the Authority is trying to work with the travelling community and recognises that it needs to improve its performance in this area.

**Resolved :-**

That the report be noted.

## **8 Report of Meeting with Portfolio Holders**

The Sub-Committee considered a report concerning a recent meeting with portfolio holders. (For copy see File of Minutes).

Councillor Armstrong commented that the meeting had been very successful.

**Resolved:-**

That the report be noted.

## **9 'Minding the Gap' - Report of the Mental Health Scrutiny Working Group**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny concerning the 'Minding the Gap' conference held at County Hall on 11 May 2004. (For copy see File of Minutes).

Tom Bolton informed the Sub-committee that over 80 delegates had attended from a wide cross-section of organisations.

Councillor Mrs Hunter commented that the seminar had been a huge success.

**Resolved:-**

That the report be noted.

## 10 Forward Plan

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny, giving details of the sections of the Council's Forward Plan which are contained within the Sub-Committee's jurisdiction. (For copy see File of Minutes).

### **Resolved:-**

That the report and section from the Forward Plan be noted.

## 11 Work Programme

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny (for copy see File of Minutes) to update Members about the work programme for the Sub-Committee.

Tom Bolton informed the Sub-Committee that Members had recently attended a Police Authority seminar which linked in with the new topic for a Working Group 'Fear of Crime'. He continued that the first meeting of the Group will be held in the next couple of months.

### **Resolved:-**

That the report be noted.

