

# Scrutiny Sub-Committee to Promote Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities

6<sup>th</sup> December 2004



## Service User and Carer Forum: Countywide Meeting – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2004

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### Report of Head of Overview and Scrutiny

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#### Purpose of Report

1. To explain that a number of Scrutiny Members attended the Countywide Forum for Service Users and Carers in August as part of a strategy to build up links with this key organisation.

#### Background

2. The Service User and Carer Forum provides a focus for people in County Durham who receive Social Care and Health Services either from the County Council or commissioned by the Council.
3. The Scrutiny process needs to build up strong links with key stakeholders. We do have representation on the Sub-Committee from the Forum and have worked closely with Service Users in projects such as the Aids and Adaptations Review and Minding the Gap.
4. To forge closer links, a number of County Council Members attended the Countywide Forum meeting which was held on the 24<sup>th</sup> August at Shotton Hall, Peterlee.
5. Perhaps the main purpose of the exercise was to permit a dialogue between Scrutiny members and Service Users and Carers without a formal agenda. The main issues which arose from the discussions were:-
  - Concern about the modernisation of day centres with a particular focus on the future of the Durham Day Centre.
  - Issues about learning disabilities including the need to broaden options beyond gardening and cooking opportunities. The role of the County Council as employer needs to be exploited further.
  - Issues about the Aids and Adaptations Service. There was still concern about some aspects of this Service. A further meeting of the Aids and Adaptations Working Group has been arranged to allow this to be explored further.
  - Disability discrimination issues. There was a view that the Council should be doing more to provide increased access in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Legislation.

- Issues about continuing care – there was concern about an apparently different criteria between the Health Service and local government services.
  - Issues about the sensory impaired. The change in criteria introduced by the Council has meant that those with sensory impairment often do not receive services which might have been available in the past. Views were expressed that the Council should be providing more assistance to voluntary bodies who were seeking to meet the perceived gap in services as a result of this change.
  - Public and Patient involvement in Health. There were discussions about how the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee would relate to the new Patient Forums.
6. The aim of this exercise was more to gain a deeper understanding of the Service User and Carer Forum and its members rather than any specific resolution of issues raised. Nevertheless, arising out of this meeting, there has been correspondence about the Durham Day Centre and also with a voluntary body dealing with sensory impairment. In addition, the Aids and Adaptations Working Group has been reconvened.
7. Views from Members who attended the Forum would be welcome particularly in relation to whether this is an initiative which should be repeated.

### **Recommended**

8. You are recommended to consider this report.

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**Contact: Ian Mackenzie Tel: 0191 383 3506**

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### **List of Members attending the Forum**

Councillors J. Armstrong, Coates, Dormer, E. Foster, M. Hodgson, E. Hunter, Marshall, Porter, Pye

### **Co-opted Member**

Councillor A. Ambler