

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2007-08

Role of the Committee

The Adult Social Care and Health Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the Council's functions in relation to social care provision for adults. We also scrutinise the activity of the Leicestershire County and Rutland Primary Care Trust which has responsibility for commissioning health care services across the County and Rutland.

The full commitment of members, officers, senior managers from partner organisations and the PCT to the Committee is fully recognised. Members have tried to develop more robust, penetrating and forensic questioning, while acting as critical friends to further the scrutiny process. However, it is satisfying to report that purposeful and good working relationships have been maintained.

A new development has been that the Chairman, Spokespersons, officers and, as appropriate, the Cabinet Lead Member attend meetings some time before each regular Committee meeting. These are to discuss emerging issues, plan and agree the longer term strategy, and set the final agenda for the next Committee meeting. Items that the Cabinet Lead Member will be invited for, in order to answer any questions that members may wish to put to him, are also identified.

Training and Seminars

Part of the role of the Committee is to gain an understanding of relevant issues. To that end, members have attended various training sessions and seminars in addition to regularly researching topics prior to meetings to better equip themselves to effectively scrutinise the issues. These included presentations on the Community Hospitals Review, a briefing on the role of the NHS East Midlands Strategic Health Authority and a workshop on Practice Based Commissioning to enable members to gain a better understanding of both the national policy and local context. A Panel has now been set up to look into what outcomes Practice Based Commissioning offers to County residents and how their health and wellbeing can be improved.

Involvement in Inspections

One of the requirements of the Chairman and Spokespersons of the Committee this year has been to represent the Committee to external inspectors. In April an inspection of Adult Social Care Services was carried out by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. This focused on access to Preventative Services for

Older People and Safeguarding (protection of vulnerable adults) across all user groups. I was interviewed by the inspectors as Chairman, and the Spokespersons were also interviewed. We are awaiting the final report.

As Chairman I was also interviewed as part of an external assessment of the County Council Services. This Comprehensive Performance Assessment resulted in the County Council receiving for the fourth year running the highest possible score – four stars, in a report by the independent Government watchdog, the Audit Commission. However there is no room for complacency and we will continue to monitor the performance and activities of the Adult Social Care Service.

Work Undertaken

Adult Social Care Issues

This year we have considered a wide range of issues surrounding the provision of Adult Social Care in Leicestershire, which are listed in the appendix to this report. Two issues are highlighted below.

To assist us in scrutinising the report on Supported Accommodation for Older People, we invited a number of independent witnesses to the meeting. We questioned them on their opinion of the proposals and were able to take their comments into account when reaching a decision. We also received a number of petitions on the issue.

When looking at the Telecare Strategy, we enjoyed the opportunity to look at preventative technologies and the Signal Bus. This bus, managed by Age Concern on behalf of the Council, promotes telecare and safety equipment such as fall detectors, smoke alarms and memory aids to vulnerable people to minimise risk. Such services will be key in addressing future challenges for the Adult Social Care Service, such as personalising adult social care.

Health Issues

One of the key issues we have considered this year is finance and the Primary Care Trust's Operating Plan. In previous years, the Committee has focussed on the PCT's financial position. However, we are pleased to report that the significant overspends have now been addressed by a regime of strict financial control and we are now able to look at future development plans. We also welcome the openness and honesty of the PCT and look forward to it continuing.

The Committee requested a report on the use of 0844/5 numbers by GP surgeries, in response to patient concerns. Our comments were acknowledged by the PCT and, although they are currently tied by contractual obligations, we

welcome the commitment they have made to revisit this issue when the opportunity arises.

We welcomed involvement in the Community Hospitals Review at an early stage, as this provided us with an opportunity to influence the development of the proposals. This will be a key issue for the future and we will be involved again throughout the consultation process.

Following Issues Up

The Committee has followed up the excellent work of the Review Panel on Access to NHS Dentistry in Leicestershire. We forwarded the report and recommendations to the PCT and have received a report from them on the progress made with implementing the recommendations. We were pleased to note that a number of changes either have been made or are planned for the future.

This year the Committee has also had a role in monitoring expenditure on the Capital Programme. At the request of the Scrutiny Commission we followed up poor performance by the Adult Social Care Service. We intend to keep an eye on this in future years.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the members of the Committee for their valued support over the last 12 months.



Dave Houseman CC
Chairman of Adult Social Care
and Health Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

NOTE:

Although not within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report, for the sake of completeness the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been included as a footnote. This Committee comprises of councillors from Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland and scrutinises the activities of the following NHS trusts which provide services to the area served by all three Councils:-

- ❖ University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust*
- ❖ Leicestershire Partnership Trust (which provides mental health and learning disability services)*
- ❖ East Midlands Ambulance Trust*

Key issues considered this year are as follows:-

- The Joint Committee has asked Leicestershire Partnership Trust to reconsider their proposals for closure of The Grange Respite Care Home in the light of complaints from carers and users. They are now doing so.*
- The Joint Committee welcomed early involvement with the East Midlands Ambulance Service Estates Strategy and also had the opportunity to be consulted on the proposals to close Syston Ambulance Station.*
- A final major issue considered this year was loss of data. We have registered our serious concern about delays in the payroll and payroll information relating to Leicestershire Partnership Trust, University Hospitals of Leicester, Leicester City PCT and Leicestershire County and Rutland PCT being discovered in a street in Stevenage.*