

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

20 February 2008

SCRUTINY OF HEALTH COMMITTEE – CHAIRMAN’S STATEMENT

**Consultation on Older People’s Mental Health Services
in Harrogate and Rural District - Improving Older People’s Mental Health Services**

Our meeting on 1 February 2008 was held in Ripon so that the Committee could be consulted formally by the North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust (PCT) on its proposals for older people’s mental health services in the Harrogate and rural district.

Central to the PCT’s proposals is the reinvestment in new services funded through the closure of the 16 in-patient beds at the Orchards Community Unit for the Elderly (CUE) in Ripon. The CUE has been closed temporarily for refurbishment since October 2006.

Janet Probert (Director of Operations) and Dr Allison Laver (Modernisation Manager, Older People’s Mental Health Services) at the PCT informed the Committee that in line policy guidance such as the National Service Framework for Older people and “Our Health, Our Care, Our Say” the new approach is to provide more health and social care services closer to people’s homes in community settings rather than in in-patient settings. Janet and Allison also highlighted the success of a range of measures such as the rapid response team and the community mental health teams that are now able to provide this new support. Janet and Allison pointed out that the number of patients in the CUE with long term needs had reduced and that additional beds in Alexander House in Knaresborough could be introduced if demand for in-patient beds started to rise.

Members accepted the principles underpinning the PCT’s proposals for more services to be provided closer to people’s homes and supported increased efforts to detect mental illness earlier.

But against a background of the strength of feeling expressed by members of the public attending we were concerned that the reduction in beds would reduce the level of respite care available to carers.

Janet and Allison emphasised that the PCT is only required to provide respite care where the cared for person has medical needs or has challenging behaviour which meet certain criteria. They were confident that they could manage this level of demand with fewer beds. They also commented that other respite care is the responsibility of social services.

The Committee did not reach a decision on whether or not to support the proposals. Instead we called on the PCT to come back to another meeting with more information on respite beds after the PCT has consulted with local groups such as the Alzheimer’s Association and Carers Resource. The PCT agreed to do this.

We also set up a task group comprising Councillors David Billing, David Heather, John Wren and myself to prepare for this second meeting of the Committee and to liaise with Derek Law, Director of Adult and Community Services to obtain a fuller understanding of

respite care and the level of demand in the Ripon area. I will also be inviting Derek to attend the next meeting.

The closing date for the consultation is 5 March so I am liaising with colleagues at the PCT with a view to agreeing a date for submission of the Committee's final response.

Rutson Hospital, Northallerton

The PCT's planned relocation of services from the Rutson to the Friarage Hospital which the Committee supported has not been able to go ahead due to space at the Friarage not becoming available as was planned. The PCT is putting in place a range of interim measures at the Rutson Hospital to ensure that patient safety is not compromised. The proposed relocation will go ahead as soon as suitable accommodation does become available at the Friarage.

Maternity Services at Malton, Whitby and Bridlington Community Hospitals

Towards the end of last month a report was sent to Right Honourable Alan Johnson MP, Secretary of State for Health, asking him to review the Scarborough and North East Yorkshire NHS Trust Board's decision to close midwife-led maternity units at the above community hospitals.

I have today received a response from the Secretary of State informing me that the report has been passed to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) to give an initial view on the referral. If the IRP's advice is that a full review is required representatives from North Yorkshire County Council and the East Riding of Yorkshire Council Joint Scrutiny of Health Committee will be given an opportunity to present the case in full to the IRP.

County Councillor John Blackie
(Upper Dales Division)

Chairman – North Yorkshire County Council Scrutiny of Health Committee
11 February 2008