

# **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

### **Statement by the Chairman**

**21<sup>st</sup> May 2008**

#### **1.0 Dementia**

- 1.1 Demographic pressures and the drive for improvement in the ways we care and support people to live independently are at the top of the national and local agenda. So I start as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee at a time when although the challenges are great, the opportunities for constructive change cannot be missed. This will be a feature of how the Committee goes about its work but is particularly the case when we consider the issue of mental health problems affecting an increasing number of older people. We must ensure that people with dementia get the best possible support and care whether they are at home, in hospital or at the end of their lives.
- 1.2 In August 2007 Ivan Lewis, the Care Services Minister, announced that the Government would be working closely with the Alzheimer's Society to develop a National Dementia Strategy and Implementation Plan for England by summer 2008.
- 1.3 Taking our lead from the intended national strategy the Committee intends to focus on three key areas:
- Improving awareness of dementia by working with stakeholders and professionals, ensuring information is provided on how to seek help and what treatment is available and tackling the stigma of misunderstanding that currently exists.
  - Early diagnosis and intervention – assessing what services are in place.
  - How do we improve the quality of care?
- 1.4 We will turn to the latter two themes later in the year when the National Strategy is due to be published.
- 1.5 In the meantime, there is much we can learn from consultation with stakeholders, partners, service users, carers and their representatives, starting at our July meeting.
- 1.6 Recent advice issued by the Care Services Improvement Partnership draws links between the dementia agenda and Telecare, something that the Committee's Telecare Task Group can examine.

## **2.0 Fair Access to Care Criteria**

- 2.1 Having been advised that the Executive was on the point of considering lowering the eligibility threshold for access to social care for adults from substantial to moderate, I decided to offer my support on behalf of the Committee. It is some achievement that this authority is lowering the threshold twice now in two years, at a time when many authorities are increasing theirs. Some now only recognise critical needs as their core responsibility. Such tightening of eligibility is inappropriate because it fails to address real and often increasing need. Lowering the threshold will help us focus effectively on the prevention and personalisation agenda, which is very much at the heart of the Committee's planned work ahead in relation to self directed support and dementia mentioned above.
- 2.2 It is also especially pleasing that the projects and work streams which have contributed to the decision to lower the threshold, POPPS and Telecare, also feature prominently on our Work Programme.

## **3.0 POPPS Project**

- 3.1 The Committee considered the interim report of the Members Task Group appointed to examine progress on the Partnerships for Older People's Project. Funded by the Department of Health over a two year period, North Yorkshire was one of 31 local authorities to set up innovative pilot projects focused on older people, providing person centred integrated care and developing preventative approaches that promote health, wellbeing and independence. Nine schemes were in operation in North Yorkshire, piloted in four geographical areas.
- 3.2 The Task Group understood the Directorate's decision not to support the continuation of all but one of the projects beyond the pilot phase. We did see evidence that information and learning from the others has been mainstreamed in some way or used appropriately, to redesign joint services and address service gaps between Adult and Community Services and North Yorkshire and York PCT and other partners.
- 3.3 The Task Group will conclude its work in June with the benefit of the final report from the consultants Acton Shapiro and the Directorate's assessment of the success of the project.
- 3.4 This evidence will help form a view on whether the pilots have demonstrated improvements in three key areas:
1. Providing more low levels of care and support in the community to improve the health, wellbeing and independence of older people, preventing or delaying the need for higher intensity and more costly care.
  2. That it has reduced avoidable emergency admissions and all bed days for elderly people.

3. More elderly people have been supported to live at home or in supported housing, such as sheltered or extra-care housing as apposed to long-term residential care.

3.5 The Committee will attempt to identify practical mechanisms that can be used to shift resources within a whole system to achieve a preventative focus. Clearly this ambition fits in well with the other work streams the Committee has adopted in terms of promoting independence and the personalisation agenda.

#### **4.0 Centres for Independent Living (CIL)**

4.1 The Government has committed social services authorities that by 2010 each locality will have a user lead organisation modelled on existing Centres for Independent Living. A CIL is a grass roots organisation providing innovative services which allow people to gain choice and control over their lives and achieve full participation in society.

4.2 The County is in the early stage of development and discussions are continuing with representatives of disabled groups. Much of the work and development will be directed towards building capacity and resources within existing networks.

#### **5.0 Reconfiguration of Day Services in Craven**

5.1 As requested by the Craven Area Committee, the Scrutiny Committee examined progress in reconfiguring day services in the Craven area. We heard from local councillors supporting and representing the views of a number of service users in the locality.

5.2 In short, the Committee supported the Directorate's work with service users to enhance the independence and individualised support for people with learning disabilities in the community. Though we did recognise the need for ongoing communication between the Directorate and a very small number of service users struggling to adapt to certain developments. The Committee has asked to be kept advised on an informal basis of these discussions.

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Care & Independence Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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Background documents: Nil

12<sup>th</sup> May 2008