

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CARE AND INDEPENDENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Statement by the Chairman

18 February 2009

1.0 Dementia

- 1.1 We have completed what now feels like the first stage of our work on Dementia. Our aim to raise awareness developed into other areas, perhaps none more important than to document what people in North Yorkshire believe makes a good dementia service. We have come forward with a range of proposals which will help people in the community and improve the quality of life for people affected by the condition and for those who care for them.
- 1.2 The national spotlight on dementia couldn't be greater especially as people like Terry Pratchett talk and share their experiences openly. Dementia is a national and local priority. Statistics point in only one direction. The numbers of people with this condition is increasing and it is affecting more and more people year on year.
- 1.3 There is generally a very low level of both public and non-specialist professional understanding of dementia. The stigma associated with it means that most of us find it hard to talk about the illness and seek to avoid the possibility of an individual, particularly one we are close to, being affected. We, as Community leaders can play our part in breaking down these barriers by helping to bring Dementia 'out of the shadows'.
- 1.4 "It feels as though our voice is finally being heard." These were the words of a colleague from the Alzheimer's Society in our early discussions. Our local consultation was supplemented by National Listening Events up and down the country. This told us what people with dementia and the people who care for them think. Unsurprisingly their hopes, frustrations and aspirations differ not one bit from what North Yorkshire people said to us.
- 1.5 That has guided us towards proposals which the Committee believes are both realistic and achievable. They are entirely consistent with the The National Dementia Strategy released recently.
- A service that is individual and person centred and puts the citizen first, underpinned by a series of values and principles
 - Community based support which promotes social inclusion. Support which tracks the progression of the condition and therefore ranges from social activities, particularly at the early stages, through to befriending, breaks and more formal respite.

- A partnership network to drive this agenda forward, co-ordinate activity and just get things done. We fervently believe this needs to be commissioned along the lines of what was previously known as the dementia collaborative but resourced on a substantive rather than a short-term basis.
 - Short breaks and respite are required from the onset of dementia to enable carers to attend events and activities throughout the care giving period. Specialist respite is required as dementia progresses and needs become more complex.
 - A service which minimises the difficulty people have in knowing where to go to get help. There is indeed an argument for people getting support from one place.
- 1.6 We have also suggested a series of actions to respond to the three main themes of the Strategy, Awareness, Early Diagnosis and Care and Support.
- 1.7 Getting a diagnosis is a good thing in that it helps people understand and plan and get access to support and treatment. We agree that before committing to a particular approach further debate on how diagnosis is approached is appropriate.
- 1.8 We have also asked that further development work be undertaken on standardising the journey of people through the process, what is known as an integrated care pathway.
- 1.9 Our proposals are before the Executive on 24th February. If agreed it will be over to the professionals and organisations to determine the best way forward over the next few months.
- 1.10 Arguably the most significant part of the immediate work ahead is agreeing a joint commissioning strategy between Adult and Community Services and the Primary Care Trust.
- 1.11 The Committee should continue to have a role in what happens next, anything less would be a waste, not just of the knowledge we have gained and the enthusiasm we have shown but also for the partnership relationships we have forged.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR TONY HALL
Chairman
Care & Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Hall
NORTHALLERTON

9 February 2009
Background Documents: None