

North Yorkshire County Council**18 July 2012****Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee****Chairman's Statement**

1. Can I thank the County Council for its confidence in appointing me as Chairman of the Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee for what will be until the new County Council in 2013.
2. My predecessor Tony Hall and Committee Members have set out a clear, exciting and challenging schedule of work for the year ahead.

Commissioning and Personalisation

3. At our last meeting we reviewed the implications for how social care is commissioned as a result of Personalisation, now known as "Think Local, Act Personal". Overall we found strong evidence of positive arrangements being made to assist voluntary organisations make the transition towards Personalisation as smooth as possible.
4. Our interest was drawn to how third sector providers in particular were adjusting to the reduction and withdrawal of block contracts. Some had experienced a detrimental effect on income as attendance payments were now only being made where individuals attend or use the service. Many however are responding positively by finding alternative means of support and revenue. The examples we examined demonstrated that organisations are realistic about the services that they provide and the opportunities that are available in making big steps in terms of what can be provided.
5. One thing is certain, the Government direction on this is set and the outcomes for users of services are unchallengeable. Therefore the case for close working between organisations and the local authority is clear.
6. Our work in this area is not complete; it is incumbent upon us to monitor progress. This will include the extent to which greater Personalisation impacts upon the effectiveness of low level intervention and prevention schemes and the joining up of services.

Strategy for Adults with Autism: Progress on Implementation of "Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives"

7. In 2010 the Government launched the National Autism Strategy for adults "Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives", which set out a three year vision. The Strategy focussed on five key areas:
 - Increasing awareness and understanding of Autism.
 - Developing a clear and consistent pathway for diagnosis.

- Improving access to the services and support people need to live independently within the community.
 - Employment.
 - Enabling local partners to develop relevant services to meet identified needs and priorities.
8. The publication of the Strategy has led to an increased profile and publicity around Autism. Campaigning by national interest organisations such as the National Autistic Society, coupled with public awareness raising led by national strategy and associated marketing, continues to be high. There is also a keen interest being taken locally in how the County Council is responding to the Strategy and developing local arrangements.
 9. We heard of the joint approach by Health and Adult Services and the Children and Young People's Services Directorate. A self-assessment has been completed and a strategy has been commissioned to complement the draft Children and Young People's Strategy which is currently out for consultation. Staffing appointments and improved training will complement this initiative.
 10. We learned that in Health and Adult Services the needs of people with Autism have traditionally been dealt with in learning disability services. The new legislation requires a fresh approach. In many cases, individuals with Autism with complex needs have been placed out of County; this was not necessarily in their best interest as it removed them from their families and communities. Current thinking is to improve services within North Yorkshire; this should include ensuring services to become "Autism friendly". One of the keys to achieving this would be appropriate training for frontline staff.
 11. The report highlighted a significant increase, both nationally and locally, of Autism cases. In North Yorkshire, in particular there has been an increase of young people with special educational needs with a statement by the local authority. There is no clear evidence to explain the increase, it is thought to be as a result of greater awareness generally and changed diagnostic approaches by general practitioners.
 12. A particular high prevalence in Harrogate was highlighted. In response, officers advised that the presence and availability of specialist services, particularly from the Third Sector, and cultural issues around a willingness to diagnose may go some way to explain this figure.
 13. Members questioned the issue around transition; when an individual leaves Children and Young People's Services and becomes the responsibility of Health and Adult Services. Officers highlighted recent work between the Directorates including the creation of a Transition Board with senior representation from both directorates and the PCT which had identified further improvements in joint working. The Committee will keep a weather eye over progress and receive a report in due course.

Looking Ahead, Further Items

14. For our next meeting we will review the results of the consultation exercise into support for carers in the county. The Committee helped shape the initial questionnaire and consultation exercise.
15. We will also review the second Local Account; the statement of Adult Services Directorate activity and performance which is prepared by the Directorate and signed off by the Portfolio Holder. When we considered the first Local Account we flagged up our intention to assess whether service users' views had been properly incorporated and whether the public had been appropriately engaged with the compilation of the Account.
16. The previous Chairman's commitment to transform the support that people with Dementia receive in the community has greatly influenced the Committee's work in this area. The momentum around this should be maintained, particularly in the light of the Prime Minister's Challenge regarding Dementia. The Committee's programme reflects that with a further examination of the wider issues around community support later in the year.
17. Finally, can I thank the Portfolio Holder, Committee Members and officers for both making me welcome and helping me find my feet.

County Councillor Don Mackenzie
Chairman
Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee