
HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel was held on 18 October 2004.

PRESENT: Councillor Dryden (Chair), Councillors Lancaster and K Walker.

OFFICIALS: J Bennington and J Ord.

**** PRESENT AS OBSERVERS:** Councillor B Thompson (Executive Member Social Services and Health)
B Colpitts (Chairman of Linthorpe Community Council).

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Biswas, McIntyre, Mrs H Pearson and Regan.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made at this point of the meeting.

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 31 August 2004 were submitted and approved.

HEALTHY LIVING REVIEW - DEBT ADVICE SERVICES

Further to the meeting of the Panel held on 31 August 2004 the Scrutiny Support Officer presented a progress report on the review into Healthy Living and provided additional information as requested in respect of the following: -

Welfare Rights Unit (Appendix 1)

- Amount of welfare paid/received on a ward by ward basis;
- Documentary evidence to support the assertion that there were joined up working arrangements including details of the Community Legal Service Partnership Concordat and Referral Protocol; joint campaigns; Draft Partnership Bid submitted to Pensions Service Partnership Fund which aimed to secure funding to provide both CAB and WRU advice services in James Cook University Hospital;
- Documentary evidence on a ward basis of outcomes of 'take-up' campaigns relating to Older People's Project a current campaign to encourage take-up of Pension Credit among over 60's; leaflet circulation to promote take-up of Pension Credit; distribution of a factsheet regarding the take-up of Tax Credits;
- It was confirmed that the take-up activity had been focussed on high-priority groups most likely to be entitled to additional benefits. The Unit's recent strategy had been to attend multi-agency events/forums in order to distribute and offer advice to targeted client groups such as Carers Week; Children & Young People with Disabilities; and Baby Fayre.

Citizens Advice Bureau (Appendix 2)

- Protocol which governs the community legal network stakeholders and information about demand for debt advice/assistance on a ward by ward basis;
- Information on 'take-up' campaigns including West Middlesbrough New Deal for Communities One Gateway Project; Benefit Take Up Campaign-East Middlesbrough; Benefits Take Up Campaign-West Middlesbrough.

Money Advice Service (Appendix 3)

- Statistical evidence to support the claim that there was an increase in demand for the debt advice service, following publicity about the debt advice service;
- Statistics reflected that in the three weeks prior to the appearance of an article in the Evening Gazette the service had taken 12 new cases involving a total of around £63,000 debt. In contrast, in the following three weeks there had been 24 new cases with a total debt value of approximately £111,000.

The Panel acknowledged the evidence provided and in relation to the Money Advice Service recognised the staffing difficulties to cope with the demand especially during periods of sickness and holidays.

The Executive Member, Social Services and Health specifically referred to the extent of the work undertaken and innovative approach adopted by the Welfare Rights Service.

AGREED that the information provided be noted the key elements of which would be incorporated into the overall review.

HEALTH LIVING SEMINAR

Further to the previous meeting of the Panel, the Scrutiny Support Officer confirmed that a Healthy Living Seminar had been arranged for Monday 15 November 2004 commencing at 9.30 a.m. at the MTLC, the purpose of which was to examine the following: -

- a) Feasibility of creating a multi-agency strategy surrounding Healthy Living
- b) Challenges and opportunities around above, and
- c) Potential tools for evaluating Healthy Living Initiatives and measuring their impact.

It was confirmed that the following had accepted an invitation to attend the Seminar: -

- Prof. P. Kelly, Director of Health Improvement and Public Health at Middlesbrough PCT
- Mrs K Bailey, Assistant Director of the North East Public Health Observatory
- Dr Lorne, member of the Professional Executive Committee of Middlesbrough PCT.

The Chair encouraged attendance at the Seminar the evidence from which was crucial to the current review.

NOTED AND APPROVED

ANY OTHER BUSINESS - DISTRICT GENERAL HOSPITAL SERVICES

The Chair referred to a previous review by the Health Scrutiny Panel concerning District General Hospital Services and information requested from the North East Public Health Observatory regarding the number of referrals to the James Cook University Hospital from outside of the Middlesbrough catchment area.

The statistics reflected that whilst as expected there were a high number of referrals from out of the area for such services as card-thoracic surgery, neurology and ENT since the James Cook University Hospital was a Regional Centre for such surgery, the figures for general surgery was proportionately small.

NOTED

