

HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel was held on 18 February 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor Dryden (Chair); Councillors Carter, Cole, Davison, Junier, Lancaster, Purvis and P Rogers.

OFFICERS: J Bennington, C Green, J Ord and N Pocklington.

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillor Brunton (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board).

** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

MINUTES – MATTERS ARISING – SPINAL CORD INJURIES

The minutes of the meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 25 January 2011 were submitted.

Reference was made to the information provided by Professor Greenough, Consultant Orthopaedic and Spinal Surgeon Director, Regional Spinal Cord Injuries Centre, James Cook University Hospital with particular regard to the reported lack of a Combined Physical and Psychological Programme or (Functional Restoration Program) within Middlesbrough. It had been noted that such an area had been identified as a major service gap in the 2009 NICE guidelines. It was confirmed that a letter had been forwarded to the Primary Care Trust in this regard in relation to commissioning plans for respective rehabilitation services.

AGREED as follows: -

1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 25 January 2011 be approved as a correct record.
2. That the information provided be noted.

CHILDREN'S CENTRES – NOTIFICATION OF BIRTHS – REGISTER OFFICE PERSPECTIVE

Further to the meeting of the Panel held on 7 January 2011 the Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report the purpose of which was to introduce the Council's Registration Services Manager to give a perspective on the availability of birth data to Children's Centres.

Members were keen to ascertain if the Registration Service could assist Children's Centres in accessing better data about births in their areas of responsibility which could assist in better targeting of services to those most in need. It was acknowledged however that inevitably there would be those people for various reasons who did not want to register at Children's Centres.

The Registration Services Manager confirmed that the service was governed by the prevailing legislation as to the extent to which information about births could be disclosed and disseminated. Within the regulations information about registration of births could be disclosed to a local education authority and a health authority if requested.

The Panel was advised that although information was previously provided to the Primary Care Trust there were currently no such arrangements. It was confirmed that a weekly return could be provided of Middlesbrough registrations, which gave details of date of birth, place of birth, name of the child, mother, father and the usual address. It was acknowledged that should such information be provided the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 would need to be adhered to.

It was noted that there were approximately 2,000 births registered each year. Members were advised that a system could be established whereby information on the registration of births could be made available on a weekly or monthly basis.

In discussing ways of encouraging people to register at Children's Centres reference was made to the possibility of the respective publicity leaflets to be made available at the Register Officer and/or a copy placed in the wallet which was provided containing a birth certificate.

Members sought clarification on the monitoring procedures and action taken should a birth not be subsequently registered at the Register Office following notification of births from midwives. It was confirmed that a birth could only be registered in the registration district in which the birth took place. It was confirmed that there was a legal obligation to register the birth of a child within 42 days of the birth. It was noted that the current practice of the Register Office was to send a reminder letter after approximately one month and should registration still not take place a requisition would then be sent by registered post for parents to comply with legal requirements after 42 days.

The Panel was advised of the 'Tell Us Once' programme developed by the Department for Work and Pensions in order to improve the way in which people informed central and local government about changes in their circumstances. It was pointed out that the Authority was working with the Department for Work and Pensions for the programme to be set up in Middlesbrough with an implementation date of July 2011. It was considered that there might be scope in the future for such a programme to be extended to other services.

Based on the information provided the Panel concluded that: -

- (a) in accordance with prevailing legislation formal links be pursued by the Director of Children, Families and Learning with the Register Office in order to receive birth registration returns on a regular basis;
- (b) suitable measures are put in place to ensure continuity and appropriate dissemination of information to Children's Centres;
- (c) the ways in which publicity material in respect of Children's Centres could be made available at the Register Officer is examined;
- (d) that the Tell Us Once programme is taken into account in setting up the suggested processes as outlined above;
- (e) that consideration is given as to how Children's Centres utilise such data in order to assist in the targeting of services to those most in need.

AGREED as follows: -

1. That the information provided be noted and incorporated into the overall review.
2. That based on the evidence received and the Panel's conclusions outlined above a Final Report be compiled and circulated to the Panel for comment prior to submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting to be held on 8 March 2011.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY UPDATE

In a report of the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel, Members were advised of the key matters considered and action taken arising from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 8 February 2011.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board referred to the period leading up to an election known as Purdah which would commence on 25 March 2011 and end on 5 May 2011. Whilst it

was unlikely to impact on the holding of scrutiny meetings during this period Members needed to be mindful of the prevailing legislation in this regard.

An indication was given that arrangements were likely to be made for an additional meeting of the Executive in order to take account of several Final Reports, which were shortly to be completed. It was also noted that given the impending local elections there were a number of shorter scrutiny reviews, which were proposed, or currently being investigated.

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