

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item 5

## HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

3 NOVEMBER 2015

<h3>Suggested Topic for the Work Programme</h3>
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#### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To advise Members on the recent recommendation made by the Social Care and Adult Services (SCAS) Scrutiny Panel as part of their review of The Provision of Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) and to seek the views of the panel on how Members wish to take the recommendation forward.

#### The Panel's Findings

2. The SCAS scrutiny panel found that there were on-going difficulties experienced in respect of responses from the police and ambulance service and that it continues to have an impact on the Mental Health Act (MHA) assessment process. It was highlighted that, for example, the process of the assessment, from start to finish, is between 2 and 3 hours. However, the waiting time for police/ambulance attendance can result in the process taking 6-12 hours. Members were advised that during this time the AMHP is often left to manage what can be a volatile and risky situation.
3. The scrutiny panel found that the police and ambulance service are responsible for prioritising their own workload and AMHPs are unable to have any influence on this issue. In an emergency, if an AMHP feels their safety is at risk, they can use the 999 number however this is used on very rare occasions.

#### Section 12 Doctors

4. The SCAS scrutiny panel was advised that there were issues with the availability of Section 12 qualified doctors, who are required for MHA assessments and who specialise in mental health.
5. It was conveyed that local authorities were encouraged to ensure that the two doctors, participating in the MHA assessments, were not part of the same

Trust. Members were informed that this often proves to be difficult because of the shortage of qualified Section 12 doctors.

6. SCAS panel members also heard that doctors that attend MHA assessments were usually paid £250 per assessment - if the patient was not already under their care. If the patient was under the doctor's care they do not receive a fee for carrying out the assessment in normal working hours. That can result in some assessments being carried out after normal working hours, which can have a detrimental effect on the waiting patient.
7. Members were informed that officers spend a large amount of time attempting to identify available Section 12 doctors to attend a MHA assessment.
8. The panel's report has been produced, although it is yet to be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board. The report has a number of conclusions and recommendations and the following conclusion and recommendation has implications for the Health Scrutiny Panel's work programme.

**The panel's conclusion** - On-going difficulties are experienced in respect of the response times from the police and ambulance service and these continue to have an impact on the MHA assessment process. There are also issues with the availability of Section 12 qualified doctors - who specialise in mental health and are required for MHA assessments. The difficulties reported warrant further investigation.

**The panel's recommendation** - That the council's Health Scrutiny Panel conducts an investigation of police and ambulance response times and the availability of Section 12 doctors, in respect of the MHA assessment process.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

9. That the panel note the information and agree if and when the item should be scheduled in to the Health Scrutiny Panel's work programme.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are no background papers for this report.

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