



MIDDLESBROUGH & ESTON HEALTH SCRUTINY JOINT COMMITTEE

PALLIATIVE & RESPITE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH A LIFE LIMITING ILLNESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. There has rarely been a time when Children's Services have a higher public profile. Advances in medical technology also mean that a greater number of children are surviving longer with conditions which they may not have survived in the past. Against this backdrop, the Joint Scrutiny Committee felt that it would be an opportune time to review the services currently available for this cohort of children and the relationships between local authorities, NHS agencies and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

CONCLUSIONS

2. The Joint Scrutiny Committee concludes that there seems to be a contradiction between central government policy in relation to this subject area. On one hand, service users (and their families) are encouraged to act as micro commissioners by being given access to Direct Payments and individual care plans seem to encourage spot purchasing. On the other hand, local authorities are encouraged to act as 'place shapers' and stimulate a local marketplace, providing a plurality of providers. The JSC feels this dual expectation/duty is unhelpful and should be clarified by central government.
3. The Joint Scrutiny Committee concludes that medical advances dictate that children with life limiting illnesses will be a group growing in number. It is felt that consideration needs to be given now as how best to structure the health and social care services to meet the needs of these children. The absence of central government guidance in relation to respite and hospice provision is particularly unhelpful.
4. The Joint Scrutiny Committee concludes that children and their families do not necessarily see or understand the distinction between health and social care organisational responsibilities and boundaries. As a result of this, it would be advantageous if future service developments were joint health and social developments wherever possible.

5. The Joint Scrutiny Committee understands that health and social care assessments are required to be assessed on need. Nonetheless, there is a concern that a cohort of people will not receive assistance as they are not deemed to be in need, when the problems faced are very real to them.
6. The Joint Scrutiny Committee concludes that it would be advantageous to service users and the wider local health and social care economy if a local marketplace of providers, including the Voluntary & Community Sector as equal contractual partners, could be stimulated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. That the local health and social care economy lobbies central government to release guidance on the policy direction in the looking after of this group of children and organisational responsibilities as their numbers become greater.
8. That the local authority considers developing policy around the supporting of a local marketplace of service providers, particularly to support this cohort of children.
9. That the local health and social care economy commences a debate, led by Elected Members, on the type of services required to address the needs of this cohort of children. Further, to consider the extent to which these services can be developed on a joint health and social care basis, with pooled budgets where appropriate
10. That the Joint Scrutiny Committee's successor body revisits service provision in this area, at an opportune time in the near future.