



SOCIAL CARE & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

HEMOCARE SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONCLUSIONS

- 1) On the basis of the evidence considered by the Panel, Homecare Services in Middlesbrough are performing well, with high rates of satisfaction amongst users of the services.
- 2) Middlesbrough Council's monitoring of the preferred providers in Homecare services seems to be effective in ensuring that requisite quality standards are met. The fact that the Department of Social Care has previously decommissioned one preferred provider, over concerns over the quality of their service, demonstrates this point.
- 3) Homecare services face a challenging and somewhat contradictory future. On one hand, Homecare services are much more complex than they have been historically, with people with greater levels of disability being cared for at home and the role increasingly developing away, from a traditional 'home help' model. On the other hand, an increase in direct payments and the personalisation agenda means that more and more people can 'commission' their own services. This leaves the, as yet unanswered, question that if direct payments and personalisation become the most popular option for people in need of services, does this leave a viable marketplace for organisations with preferred provider status? This is of particular interest when it is considered that there will probably always be a cohort who do not particularly want to take up Direct Payments and are happy to choose the preferred provider option.
- 4) In addition, the Panel would like to highlight that all care staff from preferred providers go through extensive training to develop their skills, whilst CRB and reference checks are standard procedure, before they start working with service users. Such standards are not applied to those 'commissioned' by individuals under Direct Payments. This raises the question as to how, therefore, vulnerable adults are adequately safeguarded under the direct payments framework. This is a point, which the Panel has not found an answer to, as yet.
- 5) The local authority is placed in a difficult position, which requires a particularly skilful balancing act. There is a perfectly clear expectation from central government that local authorities will increase the take up of direct

payments. Yet, local government also has a responsibility to ensure a viable market for Homecare services, as a proportion of people will always want that sort of service and not want the responsibility of direct payments. As such, the Department of Social Care should take a lead in establishing the nature of the market it would like to see and take steps to stimulate the market accordingly.

- 6) The topic of Homecare Services is inextricably linked to the national challenge of an ageing population. As a result, the Homecare debate leads into an even bigger area of debate, relating to how services will cope with the greater demands that an ageing population will place on them. Whilst it is to be expected that the Department of Social Care leads the local authority's thinking on the matter, it is a topic of such significance, that the whole of the local authority should be involved in discussing the ramifications of an ageing population on services. It is the Panel's view that Elected Members should lead this crucial debate.

Recommendations

- 1) That Department of Social Care establishes and publicises a strategic vision for how it wishes to develop Homecare services in the next 3 to 5 years. Following the establishment of that vision, the Department of Social Care should take the necessary steps to stimulate the market to bring about the realisation of that vision. The Panel would like to be involved in discussions about developing that vision.
- 2) That the local authority and specifically Elected Members, commence a debate around the future of Homecare services and specifically the additional pressures that an ageing population will bring about. The Panel considers it absolutely vital that such a crucial topic around future growing demand of local authority resources, is fully and frankly debated within the political domain.
- 3) That the Panel is updated on a regular basis of the progress of the implementation and the accompanying data produced, of the Electronic Monitoring system for ensuring that clients receive the amount of Homecare that has been assessed as necessary.
- 4) That the Department of Social Care continues to develop thorough and extensive training courses for people commissioned via Direct Payments, in an attempt to ensure that minimum standards can be applied and thereby increasing the quality of services given to those utilising direct payments. Those people receiving Direct Payments should be made explicitly aware of such courses and encouraged to send their commissioned help on such courses