

NOTES OF SPEAKERS WHO ATTENDED THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Assistant Director for Older People, Social Services: Joan Elliott Partnership Select Committee - 12 January 2001

Resources

- The Department of Health had issued national criteria for local winter planning and requested health and social care communities to use these criteria when developing their Winter Plan. This year planning was more localised with the involvement of the Trusts and Primary Care Groups. Additional funding had been made available from the Government to Bucks Health Authority to ease winter pressures of which £512,000 was designated towards health and social care.
- The two Hospital Trusts mainly involved with the Council in this area of work were South Bucks (centred on Wycombe General Hospital) and Mid Bucks (based at Stoke Mandeville Hospital). Each of the Hospital Trusts had a slightly different approach to the use of winter monies. A Care Manager and Placement/package finder had been appointed by each Trust. South Bucks Trust also block purchased 22 beds from nursing homes so that these beds were guaranteed during the winter months. The Mid Bucks Trust preferred to purchase beds as required.
- The Trusts have paid a higher rate during the winter period above that normally paid by Social Services. Some owners of the homes had been expecting the same funding for the client throughout the year. However, a joint letter had been issued from the Health Authority and Social Services to providers informing them that the funding for placements would revert to the usual price, once the winter period had finished.
- Although reference was usually to winter pressures, the greater pressure during this year was in May 2000 when there were 67 people awaiting transfer to residential or nursing home care. This was mainly due to recruitment difficulties as people who were recruited from abroad returned home during the summer months and/or when their work permits ran out. Therefore, it would be helpful if planning in future could be on an annual basis, although, clearly this would have resource implications as planning and maintaining the system was quite labour intensive.
- Members of the Committee expressed a concern over the effect that spending on winter pressures could have on long term funding. Social Services phased and targeted placements throughout the year in line with the budget allocated. If the placement process was accelerated during the winter period this could affect people requiring placements later in the year. To assist with this problem, the Department of Health has allocated additional Promoting Independence Grant of £722k for next year to Social Services but this was for the financial year 2001/02 only and many nursing home placements could be for several years. It was not known whether the Grant would be renewed in future years. The particular

criteria associated with the Grant were still not known and therefore planning could be problematic. Further assurance was required that this would be funded in the future and it was suggested that the appropriate Cabinet Member should be requested to consider this issue.

Recruitment

- Issues regarding the difficulty in recruiting key staff both in health and social care were described and steps have been taken to recruit from abroad for some nursing posts.
- Members expressed concern regarding the recruitment difficulties. Hospital wards had been closed owing to staff shortages and there was extreme difficulty in recruiting home carers. Social Services were currently undertaking a tendering process with external providers to improve provision, making it more responsive, reducing mixed packages of care and by providing a service per geographical area. Steps were also being taken within the in-house service to improve recruitment and retention of staff and to ensure a more responsive and flexible service.
- Where possible, patients should remain in the community and emphasis was placed on providing a flexible package of care that met the clients needs.
- A Member commented on the point that there were particular recruitment problems in the rural villages. He suggested that it would be useful to advertise in the villages themselves, as he was aware of some people who would welcome work within a village setting, as they had no form of transport. It was agreed that this issue should be investigated and that the Committee be informed of any progress in this area.

Partnerships

- It was noted that the health economy was becoming increasingly complex and that some placement assessments could involve the Primary Care Trusts, the Health Authority, the NHS Trust, Social Services and an independent provider. Each Primary Care Trust had a link with one of the three Assistant Directors in Social Services. It was important to strengthen partnerships with all stakeholders to provide quality services.