

## **Notes on the Site Visit to South Buckinghamshire NHS Trust in Wycombe: 19 February 2001**

The Chairman reported that a Group from the Committee had visited South Buckinghamshire NHS Trust in Wycombe on 19 February 2001, this had been very helpful and informative. The visit started with a brief discussion with the Director of Hospital Services and the General Manager on the relationship with Social Services, staffing issues and the initiatives to alleviate the problems. These initiatives included a trip to the Philippines to recruit staff and partnership ventures with the housing association.

The Group then visited several departments. Firstly Accident and Emergency, it was reported that the department had been modernised but was still under extreme pressure. The Committee noted the difficulties with the flow of patients through the department, particularly in relation to access to Social Workers at certain times during the day. In many instances patients have to be admitted rather than being moved onto more appropriate care ie being discharged into intermediate care. The Group then moved onto the new Intensive Care Unit, which comprised 9 beds each requiring 7 members of staff.

A new Medical Assessment Unit has been established to assist in clearing the backlog of patients in Accident and Emergency. Any referrals from General Practitioners (GP's) are now diverted to this unit, which contains 32 beds. The hospital would like to see this number increase as they are already working to capacity in this unit. Discharges are delayed if the patient has arrived on the ward in the afternoon, as often no social worker is available to undertake an assessment. Patients may also remain on the ward as the basic nursing skills they require are not available outside the hospital.

During lunch the Group met with Senior Managers and discussed the relationship with Social Services which included levels of service and assessment meetings. The hospital felt that a more flexible approach to work patterns was required to enable Social Workers to assist in clearing the backlog of patients. Co-operation between staff was felt to be good, but there appeared to be a lack of understanding of the issues/problems faced.