

**Direct Services Manager, Team For Older People: Dwina Wheatley**  
**Partnership Select Committee: 1 March 2001**

**Partnerships**

- In relation to a question on partnerships with the Health Authority, Dwina Wheatley reported that the County as a whole was slow to begin discussing Winter Pressures and how funding would be spent to the best effect. A monitoring process has been adopted to address this and any related issues. Regular meetings with David Beckett and John Schaler of the Health Authority are used to discuss topical issues including bed-blocking and spending priorities. Primary Care Trusts and Primary Care Groups also link in with these discussions. It was noted by the Committee, as of the 31 March 2001, financial responsibility was transferred to the County Council. Although joint working between the County Council and Health has improved and more clients have moved through the system, the figures available indicate that the pressures on beds remains unchanged.

**Assessments**

- In relation to assessments made by Social Services, it was reported that since December 2000, anyone eligible to a placement is offered an assessment. Those already in hospital were referred to Social Services and placed accordingly. It was noted that with effect from 9 April 2001, a new ruling under the NHS Plan allows anyone with capital or savings of over £18,000 will not be financially assessed for a three month period. The implications for Social Services have yet to be fully assessed.
- A Member highlighted and commented on the rigid working hours of Social Workers and asked what effect this was having on bed-blocking. In reply Dwina Wheatley acknowledged the comment and reported that the aim is to move clients into Nursing Homes as soon as is practically possible. The difficulty was the shortage of residential and nursing home placements. With some of the additional funding, recently appointed Acute Home Finders co-ordinate the discharge of clients.
- Dwina Wheatley explained that one of the aims was to have less people in Residential Homes for more to return home with the support of home carers and intermediate care. It is recognised that most can return home following full rehabilitation. In South Buckinghamshire, Community Hospitals are widely used by GPs. Other areas have not yet fully recognised the important role Community Hospitals can play as part of the future.