

## **Health & Well-being Scrutiny Committee 2011/12**

Our work programme this year has understandably been influenced by the restructuring of health services including the impact of economic constraints on health and social care services. Our work has included an overview of how the council is taking forward its efficiency and transformation agenda whilst maintaining a high standard of adult social care.

We have reviewed the impact on residents of the fluctuation in the residential care market, including the well publicised financial difficulties of Southern Cross. We considered what this would mean for the residents of the 14 homes in Sunderland to ensure continuity of care to residents and ensure that the amount of disruption was minimal.

Our main review this year was about rehabilitation and hospital discharge. Many people may need a stay in hospital at some stage of their lives, and we know that health and social care staff do their utmost to support each individual to rehabilitate. We have heard examples of a lot of good practice around smooth transitions of care but all too often the patients with complex post-hospital needs find themselves having to be re-admitted, often unnecessarily. Our aim has been to review the policies and strategies and to determine if they are fit for purpose with evidence focusing heavily on service user experience. From the evidence patients, families and carers have provided we hope to make improvement around some key areas. For example, we have emphasised the need for an integrated approach including a specific recommendation for jointly agreed protocols including with the voluntary sector. We have suggested that research is carried out into which A&E admissions are avoidable. We have suggested improvements are needed at points of transfer of care to make sure, for instance, that patient records are available when needed. We were ably supported in this work by four coopted members who between them had a range of knowledge and expertise that we have found extremely valuable in pursuing this review.

The NHS reported a variety of consultations to health scrutiny including reconfiguration of children's heart surgery, the campus closure programme for people with learning disability, reviews of end of life facilities and in-patient beds for those with learning disabilities, and new services for acutely sick children.

Local authority services were scrutinised including the implementation of personalisation whereby individuals choose how they meet their own care needs through use of a personal budget. We considered the review of the current charging regime for adult social care to support personalisation. While being aware that the Council needs to bring social care contributions into line with national trends and policy developments it was important that we scrutinised the process to ensure the system is open, fair, transparent and easy to understand.

The Committee has taken an overview of the strategic plans of all organisations and we look forward to being involved in the development of the new health strategy. At a regional level I represented the council on the regional health committee where we considered issues across local authority boundaries including children's heart surgery and reconfiguration of ambulance services.

The transfer of public health responsibilities to the council is imminent and scrutiny will have an 'overview' of health improvement. The council's public health responsibilities will extend to wider determinants of health including leisure, housing, transport and employment. Scrutiny will need to play a role in starting to develop new relationships and new ways of working to assist the Council to self-regulate its own performance in addressing health inequalities. All providers of NHS services will be subject to scrutiny, irrespective of the sector to which they belong. This would represent a significant enlargement of the health scrutiny role as it now stands.

This has been a challenging but exciting year and with the council's increased role in public health and new scrutiny powers and different relationships the year ahead promises to set new challenges.

**Councillor Peter Walker**  
**Chair of the Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee**