

Report



meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 6th April 2006

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES IN SOCIAL SERVICES

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 I am pleased to present the key issues and activities as Portfolio Holder for Social Services, since my last report to Council.

2. Key issues and activities

2.1 Key Priorities for 2006/07

The start of the new financial year is the time to focus on some key priorities at a strategic level. The Departmental Business Plan sets specific objectives and targets for service development and improvement. These have been agreed by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. A summary of the plan is attached as an **appendix**.

Some key priorities for the department are as follows:

- implementation of the learning disability improvement plan arising from the Commission for Social Care Inspection
- as part of the above, significant progress with single line management arrangements for mental health and learning disability services
- increase in direct payments facilitated by an additional investment of £1million
- completion of the Rushcliffe Extra Care Housing development
- maintaining and improving performance on intensive home care
- completion of the review of Short Breaks for children with disabilities
- to improve the attainment of Children Looked After
- achieving a balanced budget, including implementation of the £7.4million of saving plans
- implementation of a new carers strategy.

2.2 InfoCare Receives Top Award

Home care's pioneering time logging system 'InfoCare' has won the e-government category at the Local Government Chronicle Awards.

The InfoCare unit is a battery powered cutting-edge reader which is quickly and simply installed into the service user's home telephone point. It is activated by a smartcard, carried by the care assistant, who inserts it into the unit to record their arrival time. The card is left in for the duration of the visit and enables the care assistant to record the tasks they have completed during this time. It is then removed and the care assistant continues on to the next job.

The InfoCare system is used by all the Council's approved providers of home care and now forms part of Nottinghamshire County Council contract compliance. The information coming back from the units will eventually be used to pay Direct Services care assistants, home care providers and to bill service users.

At a ceremony held at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London, Paul McKay, Assistant Director received the prestigious award on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council. My thanks go to the many staff in the department and the project team who have contributed to this achievement.

2.3 Alan Meale visits Sherwood Industries

Alan Meale MP has recently visited Sherwood Industries following an invitation by one of his constituents who works there. He was shown around the factory and offices and saw first hand the contribution supported employment makes to the local disabled community. Mr Meale indicated that he was impressed by the quality of the products produced and by the general production capabilities utilising modern computer controlled machinery. Mr Meale stated that he had experience of living with a disabled person and said he understood the importance of establishments like Sherwood Industries.

2.4 Prevention Strategy

A project group has been set up to deliver a preventative strategy to improve the independence and quality of life for vulnerable adults in Nottinghamshire. The preventative strategy will establish a broad framework for future commissioning of low level services. It will focus on vulnerable adults who have low to moderate needs under the Fair Access to Care (FACS) guidance, but are not eligible for statutory services. The strategy will bridge the preventative priorities across the breadth of adult health and social care.

A series of inter-agency focus groups with front line staff who work with a range of service users in housing, health or social care will be held during April 2006. The focus groups will help identify the nature of current prevention work, highlight significant gaps and potential options for

development. This work will help inform the preventative priorities of the strategy.

2.5 CSCI Inspection of Learning Disability Services

The learning disability service has been judged by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) as "Serving some people well with promising prospects for improvement" following the inspection in July 2005.

The CSCI report noted a number of areas of good practice including:

- good progress in developing person centred services
- the re-investment of residential care provision to provide short breaks and emergency accommodation
- the use of the "Quality Tree" quality assurance system
- a good range of services for service users and support services for carers.

The report also makes a number of recommendations for service improvement with respect to:

- increased service user involvement, particularly black and ethnic minority users
- improved care management processes around person centred planning
- better information and access to services for carers
- closer working with health

The inspection report makes a total of 18 recommendations and the Director of Social Services will be leading a project team to take forward an action plan to deliver a range of improvements.

I am confident that the outcome will ensure that we can improve the services delivered to learning disabled people and their carers.

2.6 Tree Nursery

As part of the Supported Employment service, a new area of work is being set up in the form of a tree nursery. This tree nursery will be managed by the department's County Horticulture and Work Training programme based at Brooke Farm and will grow local trees and wild flowers that were once native to the area.

The nursery will be established at Sherwood Pines in Edwinstowe as a partnership with Sherwood Forest Trust. The trees and flowers grown on the 3.2 acres of land will be sold throughout Nottinghamshire via Greenwood Forest and the Sherwood Forest Trust. It is hoped that the nursery will be up and running in August 2006.

The tree nursery will give people on the supported employment programme more variety in their work, and will also give them the chance to make a valuable contribution to local wildlife by boosting the population of trees and flowers in Nottinghamshire.

**COUNCILLOR DICK ANTHONY
CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES**