

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2002 AT 10.30 A.M.**

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**REPORT OF THE ADULT CARE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
27 JUNE 2002**

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**NOTE:** A copy of the report mentioned below, together with the CCN Task Group report, has been sent to all members of the Adult Care Services Scrutiny Committee and other members who have requested the report. Further copies are available from Peter Hull, Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford (Tel: 01992 555565).

**RESIDENTIAL AND NURSING CARE HOME AND HOME CARE CAPACITY**

The Committee considered a report on market capacity in regard to places in residential and nursing homes, the availability of home care services, and on action being taken, supported by Building Care Capacity Grant, to increase capacity and develop alternative forms of care. The report focused on care of older people as requested by the Committee in January 2002.

With the implementation of block contracts, home care capacity in Hertfordshire has improved in order to meet existing demand. However, budgetary restrictions constrain the development of more rehabilitative services. There is a shortage of affordable residential and nursing home beds in the county, with particular difficulties in finding affordable nursing home placements in certain areas. Alternatives to care home placements are being developed in the form of intermediate care and extra care housing. Building Care Capacity Grants are being used in a balanced way to retain current provision, develop alternatives, facilitate hospital discharge and prevent inappropriate admission.

To assist with the scrutiny of this issue, people having links with residential, nursing and home care were invited to the meeting and spoke in detail on their individual experiences and concerns. Additionally, the following general themes were identified from letters received from the general public about their experiences as to the supply and demand for residential nursing and home care:-

(a) Home Care

- (i) elderly people wished to stay in their own home with the availability of home care and nursing care at home. Funding for home care services needed more consideration and there was also some concerns about quality of service.
- (ii) transport difficulties were identified. Public transport was felt to be inadequate and the Dial-a-Ride scheme oversubscribed.

(b) Residential and Nursing Homes

- (i) cost of residential/nursing home care was high and top ups were required.
- (ii) provision of nursing home care should be the duty of the health service.
- (iii) not enough trained staff were available at homes and there was excessive use of trainees and unqualified staff.

(c) General

Affordable housing with warden service was required by elderly people and very sheltered accommodation, or extra care.

Following their scrutiny of this issue, the Committee requested the Director of Adult Care Services to note the following comments:-

- (a) that Hertfordshire County Council's fees for home care and nursing home care were not sufficient and did not fund future investment in the opinion of care home providers.
- (b) recruitment of home care assistants and nursing home staff was difficult. The pay structure was important but feedback from staff suggested that the image and value of staff was also a key factor.
- (c) the home care block contract has been a success and improved the reliability, responsiveness and efficiency of home care. However, current capacity was fully taken up, whilst demand continued to rise.
- (d) the new Care Standards Act has imposed on residential and nursing care homes rigorous standards which some individual homes would find difficult to meet without increased funding.
- (e) there is a need to monitor market capacity very carefully and to review availability and price in the context of demand, supply and budgets available.
- (f) home owners' representatives feel that the concentration on "affordable" places masks the fact that there are some places available in nursing and residential homes, but at a higher rate than the Council currently pays.
- (g) in general elderly people want to stay in their own homes as long as they are able.
- (h) there is a fear that desirable developments proposed in intermediate care will not materialise because of increasing financial pressures.

The Committee also feels that it is important to consider progress on building capacity and how to monitor the quality of care provided at home, and to that end a Topic Group has been established to look at this.

Additionally, the Executive Member for Adult Care Services (County Councillor Jane Pitman), representing the County Council on the Local Government Association has been asked to make representations to that body on the need to relieve pressures on the home care market. County Councillor Pitman also served on a County Council Network Task Group between Autumn 2001 and Spring of 2002 on the "sustainable funding needs of personal Social Services", and a report from that Group will form the basis of a report to the Local Government Association mirroring many of the concerns of the Scrutiny Committee.

Roma Mills  
Chairman  
County Hall  
Hertford

27 June 2002