

**Appendix B to Council Minutes
Questions from the Public
Council : 17 October 2011**

**Questions from Members of the public
Under Standing Order 8.7**

1. Question asked by Abigail Lock, of 20 Crown Road, Sutton, SM1 1SB to Councillor Colin Stears Executive Member for Adult Social Services and Health

Sutton and Merton NHS (National Health Service) claim to have spent around £500,000 each year for the last few years on Sutton's carers. These figures have been, at best, questionable due to double-counting of money received for other purposes. However, last autumn, to make sure that carers get the breaks and support they deserve and need, the coalition government allocated an additional £400m to be spent on carers over the next 4 years. This equates to around £100m this financial year and therefore around an additional £330k extra p.a. for Sutton carers from Sutton and Merton NHS. What spending on Sutton's carers have they planned for this year over and above the baseline of £500,000?

Reply by Councillor Colin Stears Executive Member for Adult Social Services and Health

I am aware of the funding allocations that the coalition government announced to target support for Carers. Officers have asked Sutton & Merton Primary Care Trust (PCT) for details of their use of this allocation.

At the Carer's Partnership Board on 18th July 2011 Adam Wickings, NHS Borough Director for Sutton stated that:

"With regard to the £400m NHS funding linked to the National Carers Strategy, there is no new money. The press announcement was misleading. The Department of Health (DoH) gives us a directive on how much we should spend and invest in carers which NHS Sutton & Merton has complied with".

NHS Sutton and Merton further provided details of its application of funding as part of the Joint Carers Strategy. This Strategy is currently being consulted on and is available on the Councils "consultations website". In the Strategy, NHS Sutton & Merton list services for carers that they fund to a total sum of £511,000. These are for Carers services in Sutton for 2011/12.

The Council has not been given any information by NHS Sutton and Merton regarding future years.

I would also point out that the Council can only respond to questions using information already shared with us by our partners, in this case NHS Sutton and Merton. Further information may be obtained by writing directly to NHS Sutton and Merton.

Supplementary Question by Ms Abigail Lock

Starting next year we have got two rather wordy documents - the Council's Adult Social Care Outcome Framework and the Primary Care Trust's NHS Outcomes Frameworks and they are going to look at, firstly, the quality of life for both adult and young carers, and secondly their satisfaction with the support of the services that they receive. These would both be key elements of the assessment process. So given this, what discussion has there been with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) about their continued under investment in services for carers, which has led to an ever growing number of Sutton carers being denied breaks and other forms of support, and is correspondingly increasing the burden on carers, there support organisations and Sutton Social Services?

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Reply by Councillor Colin Stears

I recognise the DoH has required PCTs to work with local authorities, carers and their organisations and to report back on their joint working. It might therefore be useful if the Chief Executive were to write to the Chief Executive of the South West London cluster of PCTs, and inform her about the concerns that we have raised at tonight's meeting, both about the cluster's intention in making the additional finance meant for carers, available to carers in our borough. Also, about the adverse impact that failure to provide the additional finances, promised by the coalition Government, could have on the NHS Outcomes Framework and indeed the local social care outcomes. Not just this year, but next year and indeed beyond. I am aware that other boroughs within South West London might have benefited from increased PCT investment in this area, and I would like the Chief Executive to explore this in his letter with NHS South West London.

Supplementary question by Councillor Joyce Melican

As the Carers' Partnership Board, Carers Forum and Sutton Carers Centre annual review demonstrated only a few weeks ago, Sutton carers are increasingly disenchanted with the low priority that the NHS put on their needs. Recent research from several hospital pilots shows that increasing support for carers can reduce hospital and residential care admissions, generating significant potential savings to the NHS. We have a responsibility to ensure that carers stay well, children are protected from inappropriate caring roles and we do not create a group of citizens suffering from health problems as a result of the NHS exploiting their labour and neglecting needs. How can we ensure that an unelected NHS bureaucracy, which consistently prioritises short term acute issues over long term preventative care, takes greater account of carers needs now?

Reply by Councillor Colin Stears

I fully understand the frustration of Councillor Melican, local carers and their organisations. The failure of local NHS to deliver resources locally which has been committed by the coalition Government is just one of the examples where we need greater transparency and accountability at local level, for the provision of health services in our area. I very much hope that the greater powers in this field that have been proposed should be given to local authorities in the Health Bill, which is currently being debated in the House of Lords, will go some way towards remedying the current democratic deficit in provision of local health services.