

Sunita Sharma
 Head of Scrutiny and Performance
 Chief Executives Directorate

Scrutiny and Performance
London Borough of Hounslow
The Civic Centre, Lampton Road
Hounslow TW3 4DN

Bill Gillespie
 Interim Head of Communications NHS
 London
 Via email

Your contact is: Sunita Sharma
Direct Line: 020 8583 2470
Fax: 020 8583 2526 **Minicom:**
E-Mail: sunita.sharma@hounslow.gov.uk
Our ref:
Your ref:
Date: 14 September 2007

Dear Bill

Preliminary view of the London Scrutiny Officer Network to the setting up of a pan-London Joint Health Scrutiny Committee - Healthcare for London: Framework for Action

I am writing to you on behalf of the London Scrutiny Officer Network (LSN) in my capacity as co-chair of the Officer Network. You may be aware that the Network met on 10 September in order to discuss the requirement to set up a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee across London as a follow up to your earlier discussion with Dave Burn and Guy Fiegehen on 2 August. I think that it is important that I point out that the Officer Network is an advisory body only and it is the individual borough scrutiny members who sit on their health OSCs that will make the decision on any joint working.

29 boroughs attended the meeting.

In the discussion that took place a number of points were raised about the practical and logistical implications of individual boroughs OSCs/Councils agreeing to the setting up of a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) and how and at what stage scrutiny could best add value to the consultation on Healthcare for London: Framework for Action (HfL). There was a lot of uncertainty and many views expressed.

The key points made were:

- Whilst there is understanding of the requirements set out in the regulations to form a JHOSC, there was uncertainty about the merits of forming the JHOSC for Stage One of the consultation. It was felt that members would wish to look to the Stage Two consultation, as the specific proposals for healthcare will arise after the first stage.

- Practical and logistical issues – Many boroughs’ Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees are in the process of or have yet to formally discuss and consider their involvement in a pan-London JHOSC.
- The process for agreeing to participate in a JHOSC varies across Boroughs, with some Boroughs requiring the decision to be taken by full Council. This is a factor for many Boroughs to consider – they are unlikely to have a Council meeting scheduled for between the 19th October (when the consultation document is signed off) and the 29th October (when the consultation is due to begin). Whilst two Councils have already acquired approval from their full Council, for others the earliest that this approval can be sought will be November.
- Members will need to be clear what impact they can make at Stage One of the consultation as the purpose and precise nature of the Stage One consultation is unclear. Would a broad discussion on models of care ‘add value’ or should Boroughs wait until specific proposals are available?
- If Councils/ OSCs are to agree to their members’ participation in a JHOSC, they need to know the exact terms of reference for the consultation other than vision, principles and general models of healthcare delivery in Stage One. This detail is required in order to properly advise and inform members on the terms of reference for the JHOSC and for us to establish the timetable for the JHOSC. Some Council’s constitutions require this detail before agreeing to the participation of their members in a JHOSC.
- Acknowledging both the political landscape across London and the needs of Londoners, boroughs in the JHOSC would reflect different views and interests in light of the scale of the geographical area affected by the consultation. In order for the JHOSC to agree recommendations, scrutiny, members would need to know what the strategy means for London as a whole, national ramifications and local impact.
- It is unclear how the existing regional consultations where JHOSCs have been established, such as the picture of health discussions in the southeast region, relate to the HfL debate. There is an argument to suggest that the existing consultations are now obsolete.

In light of the above issues raised the LSN would welcome clarification on the following points in order to advise members and help them decide on participation:

1. When can we have the exact terms of reference for the Stage One consultation? OSCs will need this as soon as possible in order to help them decide on whether to participate in any joint working in Stage One.
2. Can the consultation timetable for Stage One be extended in order to enable those OSCs to follow their decision-making processes in order to seek approval from their OSCs and full Council?
3. Could Stage One consist of detailed briefings open to scrutiny members?

4. If borough OSCs decide not to take part in a JHOSC, will NHS London and the JCPCT strictly apply the regulations relating to access to information, etc to non-participating OSCs?
5. Would NHS London/ JCPCT consider working with clusters of JHOSCs formed along the previous SHA configurations e.g. JHOSC of North West London OSCs for both the Stage One and Stage Two consultations?
6. Many Boroughs are in the process of, or are about to start, joint-authority health scrutiny and there is uncertainty how the proposed HfL consultation relates to these. It would help members in these boroughs to have information about the status of existing sub-regional health developments over and above the references in HfL.

We would be pleased to discuss these points further with you.

Kind regards

Sunita Sharma
Head of Scrutiny and Performance LB Hounslow
On behalf of London Scrutiny Officers Network