



Health Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee 14th October 2010

Report from the Director of Policy & Regeneration

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Equity and Excellence – Liberating the NHS – Brent Council response to NHS White Paper

1.0 Detail

- 1.1 The Health Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be aware that the government has published its white paper on the future of the NHS, *Equity and Excellence – Liberating the NHS*. The white paper outlines a radical set of proposals for change within the NHS, the main points being:
- Patients should be given greater choice over the provider of their treatment and the type of treatment they receive
 - An independent NHS Commissioning Board will be established to oversee health commissioning in England
 - All acute trusts will become foundation trusts by 2013, giving them greater freedoms
 - Health service commissioning will be transferred to GPs. PCTs and SHAs will be abolished.
 - Public health budgets and responsibilities will be transferred to local authorities
 - Councils will be given the responsibility to promote integration and partnership working within health and social care services
- 1.2 If implemented, the NHS will go through one of its most comprehensive reorganisations since its foundation. Some significant changes are already beginning to happen, such as the proposals to merge PCTs in North West London to deliver the required management savings (this is a separate item on the committee's agenda). Assuming the White Paper forms the basis of the forthcoming Health Bill, as well as implementing significant structural change the NHS will also have to deliver £20bn of savings by 2014.
- 1.3 The white paper provides many opportunities for local government such as an enhanced role in healthcare commissioning and responsibility for providing public health services. That said, there are risks in the government's proposals that councils

will need to be cautious of, not least the passing of £80bn of public money to untested GP commissioning consortia.

- 1.4 There are possible implications for health overview and scrutiny committees. As it stands, the government is suggesting that the statutory powers of health overview and scrutiny committees are transferred to health and wellbeing boards. Currently health overview and scrutiny can refer issues of concern to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel if it believes that proposed changes to NHS services are not in the best interests of local people. If this becomes a function of health and wellbeing boards there could be a conflict of interest as the boards will have a role in co-ordinating commissioning of local health and social care services, as well as scrutinising the decisions it has been involved in making. This brings into question the idea of independent, democratic scrutiny of health and social care services and the proposal in the white paper is not supported by the council.
- 1.5 The council has prepared a response to the white paper, which is included as an appendix to this report. The Health Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be given an overview of the main proposals in the white paper and the council's response to them. Officers from NHS Brent will also be able to offer their perspective on the white paper to the committee.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Health Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the implications of the NHS White Paper, *Equity and Excellence – Liberating the NHS* and endorses the council's response to the white paper consultation.

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