Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Overview of work undertaken

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee has responded to a number of health and social care issues in the borough over the past year. The Committee has undertaken a major review, monitored progress on recommendations arising from previous scrutiny reviews, continued to build positive working relationships with local and regional Health bodies and Patient and Public Involvement forums, and has monitored progress on key areas of work within the Council, the North West London NHS Trust and Harrow PCT.

The Committee has:
- undertaken an in-depth review of Homecare Services commissioned by Harrow Council
- agreed to establish a joint health overview and scrutiny committee with Brent Council, and possibly other councils, to respond to North West London NHS Trust proposals to redevelop Northwick Park Hospital
- submitted a written response to a request from the London Assembly Scrutiny Committee for information regarding young people’s access to sexual health services
- contributed to the updating of the Age Concern Survey of Harrow’s Homecare Service users
- received and considered a number of written and verbal reports in order to monitor:
  o NHS proposals for the redevelopment of Northwick Park Hospital
  o progress on the North West London Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Strategy and Action Plan
  o concessionary travel issues
  o the National Service Framework for Older People
  o the School Nursing Service in Harrow
  o Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Forums
  o Social Services Complaints
  o progress on the implementation of the recommendations of past scrutiny reviews including the Support to Carers and Delayed Transfers of Care reviews
  o the future of Mount Vernon Hospital cancer services
  o People First’s achievement against Personal Social Services Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) Indicators
  o Harrow PCT’s NHS Performance Rating & the development of its Performance Improvement Plan
  o the Care Services Commission of Inspection (CSCI) Annual Review, Star Rating, and Performance Report.

Key areas of impact

The committee’s key focus this year was to examine the quality of homecare in the borough and to recommend actions for improvement. The committee carried out an in-depth review of Homecare Services in collaboration with Harrow Age Concern and community and voluntary organisations between June and December 2004. Cabinet requested that the committee undertake this review, largely to investigate public concerns regarding the quality of homecare and homecare charges. As well as investigating the quality of care, the review also focused on the effectiveness of the Council’s homecare monitoring processes as well as its processes for setting and administering homecare charges.
The committee invited service users, carers, care workers, trade unions, homecare agency managers, council staff, health professionals and community and voluntary organisations to share their views about the quality of homecare and about homecare charges.

The homecare review illustrates the ability of scrutiny to act as a ‘critical friend’ to the council. The review, which was received well by Cabinet, revealed both strengths and areas for improvement in the delivery and monitoring of homecare services. The review highlighted key service user and carer concerns and outlined a number of recommendations for urgent and medium-term action, and generated significant media interest. The review findings and recommendations were presented to, and accepted by, Cabinet in January 2005. Since the review report was published, the Council has taken action on a number of recommendations. For example, the Council has agreed to provide care workers with parking permits. This will help alleviate the parking difficulties faced by care workers, which the review found was a significant contributing factor to late homecare visits. Further actions will be incorporated into Council service plans to ensure that service user concerns are addressed. The Committee will continue to monitor progress against the review’s recommendations.

On behalf of the Committee, I should like to thank those who contributed significantly to our work over the past year. In particular, I wish to thank Andrew Morgan (Chief Executive, Harrow PCT) and his team, and Shahed Ahmad (ex Director of Public Health, Harrow PCT and recent Advisor to the Committee).

I should also like to extend a warm welcome to Jean Bradlow (Director of Public Health, Harrow PCT), Shahed’s successor, who joins us in the role of Advisor to the Committee, and who has already made a noteworthy contribution.

I would also like to thank Louise Stevenson (Age Concern), John Pope (Chief Executive, North West London Hospitals NHS Trust), Mike Thomson (Associate Director of Operations, North West London Hospitals NHS Trust), and members of the Council’s Scrutiny Unit and Departmental Officers for their invaluable support.

The committee is particularly grateful for the support of Paul Clark (Director of Children’s Services) and Jeff Hobden (ex Interim Director of Community Care). We welcome, and are pleased to have the opportunity to work with, Lorraine O’Reilly (Recently appointed Director of People First) and Penny Furness-Smith (Recently appointed Director of Community Care).

I should further like to thank Age Concern, Carers’ Support, Harrow Council for Racial Equality, the Partnership with Older People Panel (POP) and Harrow Association for Disabled People (HAD), for their contribution to the homecare review. Particular thanks are due to Councillor Margaret Davine, Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Services, who has been highly supportive. Last but not least, I wish to acknowledge my predecessor, Councillor Marie-Louise Nolan, who is now the Portfolio Holder for Communications, Partnership and Human Resources. Councillor Nolan has been an excellent and highly dedicated Committee Chair and will continue, I am sure, to make a positive impact in her role as Portfolio Holder.

Key areas of planned work for 2005-06

[This section to be updated when the 2005-06 work programme is finalised].

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee is currently finalising its work programme for 2005/06. As a result, detailed information about the work programme is currently
unavailable. However, one of the key areas of focus over the next year is certain to be the redevelopment of Northwick Park Hospital.

Over the next four to five years, the North West London Hospitals NHS Trust aims to transform Northwick Park Hospital into a modern hospital and to integrate acute hospital services with local community and primary care services. The proposed service reconfiguration will have implications for health and social services in Harrow and for those in neighbouring boroughs. While there will not necessarily be any change in the range of services available to Harrow residents post redevelopment, the way in which services will be delivered is likely to change significantly. The proposed service model will also mean there are fewer beds at the hospital and more emphasis will be placed on care in the community. As these proposals are likely to lead to a substantial variation in service provision, the Committee has agreed to form a joint health Overview and Scrutiny committee with Brent and other affected councils. The joint committee will examine whether proposals will address the health and social care needs of residents and submit its findings and recommendations to the Trust.

In addition to its contribution to the redevelopment of Northwick Park Hospital, the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-committee will continue to strengthen its links with the wider health and social care community, and closely monitor the outcomes of its previous reviews.

Howard Bluston
Chair, Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-committee

Committee meetings: 4 ordinary, 1 special
Working group meetings: 0
In-depth reviews: 1
Review meetings: 19
Visits/informal meetings: 3
Attendance by Portfolio Holder (number of meetings): 1
Statutory items considered: