

The Centre for Public Scrutiny

Health Scrutiny Support Programme

Expert Advisory Team – Supporting Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees



“The Centre for Public Scrutiny has really done a very good job in terms of getting overview and scrutiny committees to carry out some very good reports and to make sure that there is consistency across the country.” Rosie Winterton, Minister for Health Services*

The Centre for Public Scrutiny is running a Department of Health funded support programme for the 150 health overview and scrutiny committees of social services authorities as they develop their power to promote the well-being of local communities through effective scrutiny of health and healthcare issues.

The programme has three key elements and full details can be found on our website at www.cfps.org.uk/health:

- practical advice and support
- action learning programme
- measuring the impact

advisory team

Each of the 150 health OSCs can access up to five days free support from a CfPS Advisory Team – a range of health scrutiny experts drawn from across the local government and health sectors. Advisors can help health OSCs to use the CfPS health scrutiny ‘self-assessment toolkit’ to identify the areas of their health scrutiny function that they may wish to develop. The toolkit can be downloaded from the CfPS website at www.cfps.org.uk/health.

Phase 1 of the advisory support has been running since October 2004 and will finish at the end of April 2006. Over 100 health OSCs have benefited from the programme and the overwhelming response has been that the support has been very useful. The top three requests for support in phase 1 have been around:

- determining priorities for the work programme
- balancing proactive work with consultations on ‘substantial variations’
- working with neighbours and Patient Forums

* Uncorrected evidence before the Health Select Committee – 26 January 2006



phase 2 advisory support

Another 5 days support will be available to all health OSCs from April 2006 to June 2007 and applications to take part can be made from 1 February 2006 to the IDeA's Peer Clearing House (peer.clearinghouse@idea.gov.uk). To support phase 2, CfPS has appointed 4 Regional Advocates whose role is to:

- establish and maintain contact with health OSCs
- promote the phase 2 support available from the advisory team
- encourage and support OSCs to take up their support allocation
- encourage OSCs to act jointly where appropriate
- liaise with the Peer Clearing House about advisor placements
- update CfPS about work in progress in each region

The Advocates will have responsibility for support provided to OSCs in the following areas (which correspond to the Healthcare Commission regions):

North: Linda Phipps (Tel: 07917564440 email: LLPhipps@aol.com)

North East region, North West region and Yorkshire and the Humber region

Central: Brenda Cook (Tel: 07906520860 email: brenda.cook@tiscali.co.uk)

East Midlands region, East of England region and West Midlands region

London and South East: Sally Brearley (Tel: 07931564526 e-mail: s.brearley@blueyonder.co.uk)

London, Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey

South West: Andrew Lawrence (Tel: 07901944595 email: info@andrewlawrencetcs.com)

South West region, Hampshire and Thames Valley

Advisory support in phase 2 will be provided in a flexible way around the following three areas:

- 'essential' health scrutiny (getting the basics of health scrutiny right)
- 'advancing' health scrutiny (building on the foundations of good health scrutiny)
- 'national policy, local focus' (the local impact of healthcare policies)



1) 'Essential' Health Scrutiny:

- health scrutiny induction (practical scenarios and introducing the toolkit)
- completing the toolkit and planning further support
- skills for Chairs and members (questioning, listening and weighing evidence)
- selecting priorities, planning work programmes and measuring impact (balancing proactive reviews and consultations)
- defining 'substantial variations' and responding to consultations
- joint health scrutiny and delegation
- working effectively with Patient Forums

2) 'Advancing' Health Scrutiny:

- revisiting the toolkit (reviewing current practice and identifying improvements)
- developing relationships with new NHS bodies after reconfiguration
- scrutinising commissioning (including specialist and practice based commissioning)
- improving public health and tackling inequalities
- working in 'spearhead' areas
- working with Foundation Trusts (during their applications and monitoring their impact on the health economy)
- regional and sub-regional health scrutiny (including working with District Councils)
- contributing to, and building on, the Healthcare Commission's annual healthcheck
- community involvement and engagement (councillors constituency work; public involvement and engagement in work programming and reviews; media engagement)
- making the right connections (links to local authority executives, local strategic partnerships and local area agreements)

3) 'National Policy, Local Focus':

- access to services (choice/choose and book/NHS IT)
- practice based commissioning
- payment by results
- care outside hospital
- taking healthcare to the patient
- choosing health



Advisor skills

Advisors can:

- meet Chairs and/or support officers locally, sub-regionally or regionally
- attend OSC meetings
- plan, develop and facilitate events involving OSCs, NHS bodies, Patient Forums and other agencies
- **scope scrutiny reviews**
- advise OSCs during scrutiny reviews
- identify information sources and 'expert witnesses'
- help OSCs to develop a work programme
- evaluate OSCs effectiveness
- explain health and healthcare policies

Full details of the support available and how to access it are available at www.cfps.org.uk/health/practical-iat or for an informal discussion contact the Regional Advocate for your area or call Tim Gilling, Health Scrutiny Programme Manager (Tel: 07876710046 email: tim.gilling@cfps.org.uk)