

North Central London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)

6 June 2013

Implications for Health Scrutiny of the Francis Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In June 2010, the Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley, appointed Robert Francis QC to undertake a public inquiry into the failures of Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. Its terms of reference were:
 - To examine the operation of commissioning, supervisory, regulatory and other agencies in their monitoring role of Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust (Stafford Hospital) between January 2005 and March 2009;
 - To identify why problems were not identified and addressed sooner;
 - To identify relevant lessons for how any future failing regimes can be identified as soon as practicable within the context of NHS reforms.
- 1.2. The final report was published on 6 February this year and made 290 recommendations. It describes the failings as a 'disaster' and 'one of the worst examples of bad quality service delivery imaginable'. The Inquiry looked at the hospital itself and the roles of the main organisations with a role in overseeing it, including the Department of Health, the strategic health authority, the PCT, national regulators, other national organisations, local patient and public involvement and health scrutiny.
- 1.3. Sections of chapter 6 of the report set out the role and responsibilities of overview and scrutiny and describes the activity of Stafford Borough Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and Staffordshire County Council HOSC and are attached.
- 1.4. Particular conclusions about the role of scrutiny included:
 - Lack of detail in notes of some meetings about Stafford Hospital;
 - The need to for HOSCs to be more proactive in seeking information;
 - An over-dependency on information from the provider rather than other sources, particularly patients and the public;
 - Lack of resources, particularly in small borough committees; and
 - The need for scrutiny to be conducted at arms-length rather than as a 'critical friend'.
- 1.5. The conclusions and recommendations within chapter 6 of the report that relate directly to health scrutiny are as follows:
 - 6.276 – 6.295
 - 6.344 – 6.353
 - 6.459
 - Summary of recommendations

