

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 9

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Audit Commission Report on Health Inequalities

Date of Meeting: 24 June 2010

Report of: The Director of Strategy and Governance

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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 At its 29 September 2009 meeting, the Audit Committee considered an Audit Commission report on Health Inequalities in Brighton & Hove (the Audit Commission report is reprinted as **Appendix 1** to this report).
- 1.2 The Audit Committee decided to refer the Audit Commission report to the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) in order for HOSC to monitor the implementation of the report recommendations. Although not explicitly stated in the Audit Committee minutes, it seems reasonable to assume that the matter was referred to HOSC because Audit Committee members felt that 'health inequalities' were a HOSC issue.
- 1.3 However, whilst 'health inequalities' undoubtedly fall within HOSC's remit, it was clear from the Audit Commission report Action Plan that most of the report recommendations were not for implementation by health bodies. In fact, the bulk (seven out of nine) of the report's recommendations require implementation by officers of Housing Strategy (albeit sometimes working in conjunction with Public Health officers).
- 1.4 HOSC members therefore agreed to refer this matter to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission (OSC), asking the OSC to decide where this issue

might best be examined. The OSC has responsibility for “determining arrangements for dealing with a particular issue” where “matters fall within the remit of more than one Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Constitution Point 6: Paragraph 3.1b). The OSC considered this matter at its 27 April 2010 meeting and agreed to refer the matter to ASCHOSC, since most of the Audit Commission report recommendations involve the council’s Housing Strategy department. An extract from the minutes of the OSC meeting is reprinted as **Appendix 2** to this report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That members:

(I) note the contents of the Audit Commission Health Inequalities report (**Appendix 1**);

(II) determine what additional action to take in regard to monitoring the implementation of the report Action Plan.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 ‘Health Inequality’ refers to the variable health outcomes across the population, with some groups of people typically suffering much worse health and earlier mortality than others.

3.2 Given the existence of a national framework of standardised NHS healthcare provision available to all UK citizens free at the point of contact, it is not generally considered that health inequalities significantly correlate with unequal access to healthcare or with major differences in the quality of NHS provision from place to place (although poorer communities may typically experience some access problems, particularly in terms of primary care services such as GP surgeries and dental practices).

3.3 Rather, health inequality is thought to correlate most strongly with social factors, such as worklessness, poor housing etc. Therefore, tackling health inequality requires effective partnership working between health bodies, local authorities and other agencies.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 No formal consultation has been undertaken in preparing this paper.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 There are none for Overview & Scrutiny, as any monitoring work can be managed by the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) team in the course of its day to day work.

Legal Implications:

5.2 The actions recommended at 2.1 above fall within the authorised functions of ASCHOSC. Part 6.1, paragraph 3.2(vii) of the council's constitution refers.

Equalities Implications:

5.3 Health Inequalities are clearly a core equalities issue, and as such are addressed within the main body of the audit Commission report.

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 None identified.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 None identified.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 None identified.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.7 Tackling health inequalities is a core priority of the Council ("Reduce Inequality by increasing opportunity"). It is also a significant driver for the Local Strategic Partnership and one of the key determinants of NHS Brighton & Hove's commissioning strategy.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. The Audit Commission Health Inequalities report;
2. Extract of relevant minutes from the 29.09.09 Audit Committee meeting.

Documents in Members' Rooms:

None

Background Documents:

None