

Wiltshire County Council

Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

14 September 2005

Healthcare Commission – Assessment of Core Standards for NHS Trusts

Purpose of Report

1. To inform members of the changes to the way the performance of NHS trusts is assessed and to explain the role of the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee in the new system.

Background

2. The Healthcare Commission has replaced the existing system of “star” ratings, as a method for measuring the performance of NHS Trusts, with a new self-assessment of core standards which is mainly carried out by the Trusts themselves.
3. The principle behind the introduction of the self-assessment is that it is the responsibility of trust boards to satisfy themselves that they are meeting core standards. The self-assessment will apply to all healthcare services, including primary care trusts, ambulance trusts, acute trusts, specialist trusts and foundation trusts.
4. Local partners are seen as crucial contributors to the self-assessment in order to provide ratification and balance to the statement issued by the trust itself. Health overview & scrutiny committees, patient and public involvement forums and strategic health authorities are seen as being the key local partners.
5. Ultimately the self-assessment will measure the performance of trusts in meeting core standards over a 12-month period each year. However, for the first year trusts are being asked to produce a draft self-assessment in October 2005, which the final assessment being submitted in April 2006.
6. The Healthcare Commission recognised the difficulties inherent in setting such a short time frame for the draft self-assessment, and as such has agreed that overview & scrutiny committees may comment that they have not had sufficient time to produce a comment. This special dispensation applies to the draft assessment only. However, it would be a good learning process for scrutiny members if time could be found to make short comments regarding performance for each trust against the core standards at this stage. It will also allow members to make decisions about the future process for providing comments and what additional information is needed from the trusts in order to make the best use of this opportunity.

7. There are potentially eight trusts requiring comments from the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee as part of their self-assessments:

Kennet & North Wilts PCT
West Wilts PCT
South Wilts PCT
Bath NHS Trust (Royal United Hospital)
Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust (Great Western Hospital)
Salisbury Healthcare NHS Trust (Salisbury District General Hospital)
Wiltshire Ambulance Trust
Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust

8. Guidance on how to comment on the self-assessments is available for each member of the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
9. The trusts have asked for comments by the end of September in order to give opportunity for the trust boards to consider them before the self-assessments are submitted to the Healthcare Commission.

Recommendations

10. With potentially eight trusts to provide comments for, it is not practical or desirable to deal with each comment in a committee setting. It is therefore recommended that a one off Task Group be formed to meet before 26 September in order to put together brief comments for each of the self-assessments in question.
11. That the Task Group is made up of three members, one from each PCT area in Wiltshire.

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