

Report to: **East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)**

Date: **20th March 2008**

By: **Director of Law and Personnel**

Title of report: **Healthcare Commission Annual Health Check process 2007/08**

Purpose of report: **To update HOSC on the annual health check process for 2007/08 and to agree HOSC's approach.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOSC is recommended to:

- 1. Agree HOSC's approach to the Healthcare Commission Annual Health Check process 2007/08 as proposed in paragraph 3.3.**
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1. The Annual Health Check Process

1.1 In 2005/06 the Healthcare Commission introduced a new system for assessing the performance of NHS organisations, known as the 'Annual Health Check'. This requires all NHS organisations to submit a self-assessment against the national 'Standards for Better Health'.

1.2 As part of this process, NHS organisations are required to invite third parties including HOSCs, Patient and Public Involvement Forums and Strategic Health Authorities to make any comments on the organisation's performance against the standards based on evidence gathered during the year. Third parties are not required to comment and there is no penalty for the NHS organisation or the third party if commentary is not submitted. Any comments received must be included verbatim by the NHS organisation within their self-assessment.

1.3 The Healthcare Commission then cross-checks the self-assessments against nationally held data and the comments received by third parties to identify any inconsistencies and any areas of non-compliance with the standards. On the basis of this analysis, around 10% of organisations receive a detailed inspection on the basis that they have an increased risk of non-compliance. A further 10% of organisations are selected entirely at random to receive an inspection.

1.4 The Healthcare Commission uses the self-assessments, their analysis and any inspection findings to calculate two ratings for each organisation – one for the quality of services and one for the use of resources.

2. HOSC commentary in previous years

2.1 2005/06 was the first year of this process. HOSC submitted general commentary on each NHS organisation but decided that a far more extensive analysis would be required in order to submit detailed commentary against the standards. This detailed analysis was not possible within the timescale.

2.2 There were a few changes to the process for 2006/07. The main difference was that, as well as being assessed against the 24 core standards, some NHS organisations were assessed against one or more of the developmental standards. The developmental standards went beyond the basics and were intended to encourage organisations to continuously improve.

2.3 In terms of the third party commentaries, the Healthcare Commission encouraged these to be more focussed on the individual standards, and less on general observations about the

organisation. The Commission is also emphasised the need for third parties to be able to support their comments with evidence.

2.4 The HOSC Scrutiny Lead Officer mapped HOSC's key areas of work during 2005/6 against the national standards and identified the few most relevant standards to comment on. Comments were prepared against the few identified standards based on HOSC meeting minutes or review reports and, following review by HOSC members and agreement by the HOSC Chairman, these were submitted to the relevant NHS organisation in mid-April 2007.

3. HOSC proposed approach for 2007/08

3.1 HOSC's work in 2007 has focussed almost entirely on the Fit for the Future programme of evidence gathering and reporting. This has meant the Committee has been unable to undertake its usual varied work programme and therefore has very little evidence on which to base comments on the performance of NHS organisations against the standards.

3.2 In addition, HOSC officer capacity is currently devoted to managing HOSC's referral of the PCTs' decision on maternity and related services to the Secretary of State for Health. This is currently being given priority over other work.

3.3 It is therefore proposed that HOSC makes no comments this year. It is also proposed that the Chairman writes to the relevant PCTs and Trusts to explain the position so they can include this letter within their declaration to the Healthcare Commission.

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