

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
1 MAY 2007**

**NUFFIELD TRUST PAPER – THE POLITICS OF SCRUTINY,
RECONFIGURATION IN NHS ENGLAND**

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To bring to the attention of the OSB the publication of a report by the Nuffield Trust, which attempts to outline the evolution of the health scrutiny function and its impact on health policy and associated decision making.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That the OSB notes and considers the content of the attached report.

DISCUSSION

3. As the OSB is aware, local authorities have a legislative power to scrutinise local health service provision. Further to that, when there are proposals for substantial variations to local health services the local NHS is statutorily obliged to consult with Overview & Scrutiny.
4. This power of health scrutiny has been in place for around four years and has come to be a high profile element of local government's scrutiny powers.
5. With this in mind, the academic/research wing of the Nuffield Trust has recently published a report, which attempts to present a picture of how health scrutiny is working across the country and the impact it is having on health policy and local decisions about the configuration of health services.
6. The report makes for informative reading for anyone interested in the role of Non-Executive Councillors in health scrutiny. It is, however, of particular interest to Middlesbrough Council, as one of the case studies it employs is the recent Acute Services Scrutiny Review. As the OSB will be aware, this review involved a joint scrutiny committee of six local authorities, which was chaired and supported by Middlesbrough Council.

7. The attached report presents a positive account of the scrutiny process in relation to the Acute Services Proposals and the role that scrutiny can play on behalf of the communities it represents.
8. Given the recent structural changes within the regional NHS, it is likely that there will be more statutory consultations for health scrutiny to respond to in the coming year or two. When coupled with the current policy agenda facing the NHS, all evidence would indicate that there will be a challenging and expanding workload for health scrutiny.
9. To this end, it was felt prudent to share with OSB the attached report on the evolution of health scrutiny, coming from a respected source such as the Nuffield Trust.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

10. Please see the attached report Nuffield Trust Paper: *The Politics Of Scrutiny, Reconfiguration In NHS England* ¹

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¹ The report can be accessed on the internet at <http://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/ecomm/files/Politics%20of%20Scrutiny.pdf>