



Public Health Development Unit  
Department of Health  
Wellington House G 16  
155 Waterloo Road  
London SE1 8UG  
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Scrutiny & Equalities Team  
Tower Hamlets Town Hall  
Mulberry Place

5 Clove Crescent  
London E14 2BG

Enquiries to:

Tel: 0207 364 0941

Email: [Jebin.syeda@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:Jebin.syeda@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Web: [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk)

### **Healthy Lives Healthy People white paper – Health Scrutiny Panel consultation response**

Dear Mr Lansley,

I am writing in response to your public consultation exercise, which ends 31st March 2011 on behalf of the Health Scrutiny Panel at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the proposals outlined in the above consultation document.

The Health Scrutiny Panel welcomes the shift to give local people more power and say over their health service. We are supportive of the move to place health improvement at the heart of the local authority and will respond positively to changes in the structure and delivery of healthcare in the aim to do this. We believe that moving healthcare to local authority will mean that we can be much more responsive to local need. Whilst we recognise and support the move to more localised control over health, we need to ensure that any new arrangements are robust and enable decision makers to be held to account. Scrutiny has developed a track record of drawing together cross cutting issues at local level in relation to health inequalities and we see the new approach as an opportunity to develop this.

Health Scrutiny has statutory powers to call to account partners who provide local services and this has been used well to address local health inequalities. Over time it has developed as an effective resource and been a motivation for our partners to engage with elected representatives and enable the development of transparent and effective scrutiny. Through these statutory powers health scrutiny has developed as a resource for health colleagues to engage the views of the local community in helping to address local health issues. It is not clear how health inequality responsibilities will operate between the Health and Wellbeing Boards, GP Commissioning Consortia and local authority. In any environment, scrutiny would need to continue to have statutory powers and strong guidelines to enable it to hold local providers and commissioners to account whilst maintaining the independent role it has established.



We believe that the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel should regularly be invited to attend the Health and Wellbeing Board as an independent Member. This will enable a better understanding of issues being discussed and to use this to develop and prioritise the work programme and identify scrutiny topics. It will also enable our recommendations to be fully considered and help to strengthen the partnership work. In setting up the Health and Wellbeing Board and the GP Commissioning Consortia, we would want to ensure that scrutiny is independent yet there are strong links with them so that they can be held to account for decision making and commissioning through independent and transparent scrutiny. The new structures must work in a way that they still continue to focus on local needs and local solutions and we believe that opening up the Health and Wellbeing Boards to the Chair of Health Scrutiny Panel will give local people confidence that this is the case.

Scrutiny is dependent on relationships and we have developed these well locally. Health Scrutiny already has in place co-opted Local Involvement Network members and relationships with Trusts and we believe that these can be built on in the new structure. Tower Hamlets Involvement Network (THINK) which will become HealthWatch, have worked closely with the Health Scrutiny Panel. They have been a valuable resource for the local community and for Health Scrutiny, bringing to the fore health issues in the borough. We write in support of developing a strong independent local voice through THINK. A strong local voice through THINK and local councillors are crucial to maintaining a strong and transparent health service, we would not want this to be lost through the new changes.

I hope these comments are useful and look forward to hearing on the consultation response.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Tim Archer  
Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets