

Wednesday 12/06/2013

Question to the B&H Health & Wellbeing Board

- It has just been reported by Hansard that yesterday (11th June) Jeremy Hunt, the Secretary of State for Health, when asked about “What steps he is taking to increase accountability in the NHS”
- That he replied “We have transformed accountability in the health system by setting up Healthwatch and introducing stronger local democratic accountability through Health and Wellbeing boards”.
- My question is ...
- Can the Health & Wellbeing Board apply pressure to the Community Voluntary Sector Forum (the CVSF) to accept the recommendations (and comments) of Robert Francis QC in respect of how they are developing the Brighton & Hove Healthwatch?
- The Francis Report identified many serious shortcomings of the Staffordshire Link, and made firm recommendations to be carried forward into the new Health & Social Care Watchdog to be known as Healthwatch.
- These are detailed in a separate paper, which is too long to read out now, but which is attached.
- My own experiences of our local LINK and the CVSF show many parallels with Mr Francis's findings, and I am concerned that the CVSF are now developing our Brighton & Hove Healthwatch without any regard to the Francis Report recommendations.
- We are now over two months into the contract for the new HealthWatch, and there has been no Public Engagement yet. The CVSF seem to be going their own “closed shop” way, and showing no “transparent process”, despite questions being asked of their Chief Executive Officer.
- I shall conclude by quoting just two examples:
 - Paragraph 1.174 (of the Francis Report) states that those with a responsibility for HealthWatch should seek the involvement of the public (as set out in the full table of recommendations).
 - Page 481 of the Francis Report is flagrantly being disregarded in which concerns are expressed about “recruiting from a small unrepresentative pool of the usual suspects”. The CVSF are not inviting “fresh blood” to join them in the set-up of HealthWatch.
- So my question is:
Can the Health & Wellbeing Board apply pressure to the CVSF to accept the recommendations (and comments) of Robert Francis QC in respect of how they are developing the Brighton & Hove Healthwatch?

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