

The Chair's summary

In my first year as Chair of the Health Scrutiny Board, it is with a great deal of satisfaction and sense of pride that I submit this year's annual report.

The year has been particularly challenging as we have strived to make a significant contribution to the well being of the people of Leeds. The Board has taken a very proactive role in raising and responding to public concerns over some proposals put forward by some of our key NHS partners. In order to protect local health services and the patients they support, we have robustly challenged proposals and sought clarity from a wide range of NHS organisations on a number of issues.

We have covered a considerable range of areas and different issues over the course of the year. The main issues and areas covered include:

- Scrutiny inquiry into Promoting Good Public Health;
- Renal Services in Leeds;
- Dermatology Services; and,
- Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust – Foundation Trust proposals.

A brief outline of these areas is provided elsewhere in this report, along with an summary of the Board's full work programme. However, I think some of the Boards highlights over the year have been:

- Identifying the need to strengthen the consideration of 'health implications' within the Council's decision-making processes – similar in nature to legal and financial implications;
- Recognition of the Board's work, leading to a positive profile across an increasing range of local, regional and national NHS organisations;
- Successfully championing the views of patients – demonstrated through the work around dermatology and renal services. Specifically in terms of renal services, this included a public apology that collectively, the local NHS had failed to fully engage with the Scrutiny Board and other interested parties early enough in the process.
- Being instrumental in a significantly improved working relationship between LTHT and dermatology patients – which included the forming of a recognised dermatology patients panel;
- Receiving assurance from the Strategic Health Authority (NHS Yorkshire and the Humber) that the issues highlighted by the Board's work around renal services would be considered as part of appropriate accountability processes for both NHS Leeds and LTHT.
- Amended constituency boundaries and a clear commitment to improving patient involvement and engagement arrangements as part of LTHT's revised Foundation Trust proposals: This was a direct result of the Board's consultation response on the original proposals, which drew on the experience of the Board's work around renal services and dermatology services;

I feel that the Board has also established an approach to some aspects of its work programme that need to be maintained and developed over coming years. These include:

- Regular discussions with each of the local NHS trusts;
- Improved quarterly performance management arrangements – which includes a joint NHS Leeds and Leeds City Council performance report;
- Re-establishment of arrangements to consider potential service changes and/or developments.

However, there is still work to do – and the Board needs to be flexible to adopt to the ever changing environment it operates in. As public finances take the strain of the global economic downturn, I feel the work of the Board and the role it plays will be increasingly important. Clearly, responsibility for decisions within local NHS Trusts is not just the responsibility of the Scrutiny Board or Executive Directors: Trust Boards and non-executive directors have a significant role, and I believe it is important to establish better working relationships in this area – by establishing clearer, and more consistent terms of engagement. In this regard, and with the Board's consent, I have written to the current Chair of each local NHS Trust seeking their views on how these relationships can be more clearly established and developed. I see this as an area for further development over the coming year.

In summary, through our work as the Council's watchdog for health, I believe that Board has effectively and significantly raised the public profile of its work – receiving regular and frequent coverage through the local media. In addition, the Board has been successful in looking beyond the traditional boundaries of our local NHS partners for contributions to its work – highlighting the cross-cutting nature of health issues. As such, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the work of the Board during the year, including internal and external witnesses, scrutiny and governance officers and to Members of the Board for completing our busy work programme with such enthusiasm and commitment.

I look forward to the improved ways of working continuing to develop and become more established over the coming year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Dobson', written in a cursive style.

Cllr Mark Dobson, Chair of Scrutiny Board (Health)