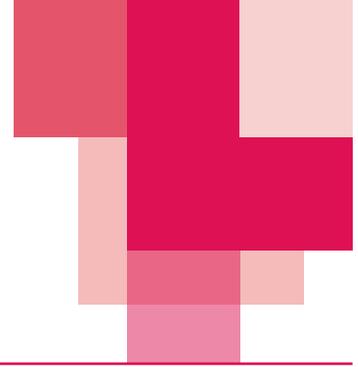


# SUCCESSFUL SCRUTINY 2013





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## The Centre for Public Scrutiny

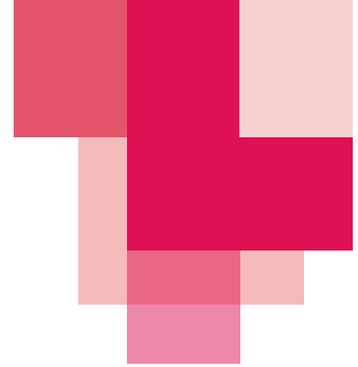
The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), an independent charity, is the leading national organisation for ideas, thinking and the application and development of policy and practice to promote transparent, inclusive and accountable public services. We support individuals, organisations and communities to put our principles into practice in the design, delivery and monitoring of public services in ways that build knowledge, skills and trust so that effective solutions are identified together by decision-makers, practitioners and service users.

# Contents

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Introduction	5
Overall impact	
<b>Winner –</b> Boston Borough Council	6
Innovation	
<b>Winner –</b> Maldon District Council	7
<b>Shortlisted –</b> Stoke-on-Trent City Council	8
Medway Council	9
Involving communities	
<b>Winner –</b> London Borough of Hackney	10
<b>Shortlisted –</b> Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	11
London Borough of Haringey	12
Raising the Profile	
<b>Winner –</b> Westminster City Council	13
<b>Shortlisted –</b> Boston Borough Council	14
Yorkshire and the Humber Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	15
Transforming services	
<b>Winner –</b> South Somerset District Council	16
<b>Shortlisted –</b> Northampton Borough Council	17
Suffolk County Council	18
Working together	
<b>Winner –</b> South Somerset District Council	19
<b>Shortlisted –</b> Telford and Wrekin	20
London Borough of Haringey	21
Other high-quality work	22

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# Introduction

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2013 marks the tenth anniversary of the Centre for Public Scrutiny, and the sixth of our annual Good Scrutiny Awards. Since we were established in 2003, public scrutiny has evolved significantly, but good scrutiny still means having a positive impact on the day-to-day lives of citizens. Scrutineers up and down the country continue to carry out this valuable work with this end in mind, and we have had the honour of recognising the best examples since we established our Awards in 2008.

This year's award winners and shortlisted entries share many characteristics with those of previous years, but the subject matter reflects a public sector in flux. Major public sector reforms – of welfare and in the health service, for example – have now come to pass. In 2013 we can see scrutineers identifying these central issues and engaging successfully with them to find creative local solutions. The judges were particularly struck by the number of entries from scrutiny committees contributing to the development of local responses to national welfare and council tax reforms, thinking about issues of fairness and vulnerability and seeking to build resilience.

Resource constraints – for scrutineers themselves and for the organisations within which they work – have clearly become even more significant, but encouragingly we have seen a number of high quality entries from smaller authorities, achieved without throwing resources at the service. Perhaps most encouragingly, the entries this year show evidence of a maturing approach by executives – recognising the worth of strong and effective accountability in times of great upheaval by increasingly referring difficult issues to scrutiny and asking for scrutiny's help in tackling them.

We hope that by demonstrating the impact which can be achieved by determined, focused and imaginative scrutiny of difficult issues, we will encourage both scrutineers and decision-makers to learn lessons and ensure their own approach to scrutiny and accountability matches up to the high standards of the best.

Jessica Crowe

**Executive Director, Centre for Public Scrutiny**

## Overall impact

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### Winner

#### Boston Borough Council

This council used scrutiny to give everyone an opportunity to talk about the impact on communities caused by a sudden and dramatic influx of migrant workers, especially in rural areas with a long history of population stability. There was growing tension and concern from more long-standing residents about employment, wages, doctors' waiting lists, school places, housing provision, and law and order.

**The judges** considered that this review was not so much about the publicity that the work received but about enabling people to talk about something that is not usually talked about. In this way Boston's scrutiny turned what was a tense local situation into a reasoned and frank debate about immigration. It demonstrates scrutiny's power in facilitating a powerful public discourse.

#### Impact

One of the principal outcomes of the review was the fact that it provided the opportunity for councillors, and others, to take part in an educated debate about immigration and its local effects. This was a debate and discussion that needed to happen, and that led to positive results. The group recognised, and sought to act on, concerns around the vulnerability of migrant workers – particularly around the role of gangmasters, and their health outcomes.

The review succeeded in dissipating much of the tension around this issue. The report itself, and its recommendations focusing on integrating migrant workers more effectively into the local community, were recognised as groundbreaking and have been cited by the Prime Minister, as well as being the subject of sustained interest and action by the Home Office and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Migration at the House of Commons.

I have read lots of council reports and this was a revelation to me. It is the first council report I have ever read which actually, in plain English, defuses and throws a light on a situation which many people who don't know Boston and look at it from the outside think is potentially explosive.

I found the report not only well presented and well written but eminently sensible. You did in one what it would take central Government a long time to do.

**Alan Hardwick,**  
Lincolnshire Police and  
Crime Commissioner

# Innovation

At first I had reservations concerning the Committee's decision to establish the working group and undertake a detailed scrutiny of the findings [...]

I am pleased to say that in practice, the approach adopted by the working group was constructive and helpful. [...]

The interest shown by the scrutiny function in the views and welfare of staff has helped to foster improved officer-member relations within the council.

**Fiona Marshall,  
Chief Executive**

## Winner

### Maldon District Council

#### Scrutiny of Staff Survey 2011 results

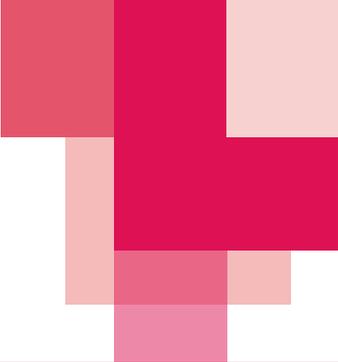
After negative results from its survey in 2011, the Overview and Scrutiny committee of Maldon District Council took the initiative of conducting a full review into the staff survey process, to highlight areas where improvement in the survey could be made, but also in tracking how survey responses were leading to council action. This was to test the approach taken by management, and to make sure that councillors were engaging with staff concerns.

**Judges** thought that this review provided an example of a council doing something different with performance management, and scrutiny helping with building relationships between officers and members.

#### Impact:

- The Staff Survey was conducted again in February 2013. It reported that the overall results showed a significant improvement in staff morale across the board (eg from 28% to 72% saying that "there is a positive culture within the council")
- A more consistent approach by the council and its members to working closely with staff to tackle issues, arising in part from Member representation on the council's Staff Forum, which provides Members with a direct link to frontline staff
- Agreement about the future conduct of staff surveys, and how management and staff can learn lessons effectively from the experience to bring about improvements.

# Innovation - Shortlisted



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## Stoke-on-Trent City Council

### Inclusive and transparent involvement

**The judges** thought that this review of the night-time economy showed the effective use of digital services in the right way – using a wide range of techniques to have a conversation with the public, local businesses and partners.

#### Impact:

- A tangible culture change in how the council engages with local people through use of social media
- Increased participation of younger people in council consultations: specifically, a sizeable number in the 18 to 24 age range. The 18-24 age group is traditionally considered more difficult to engage in council consultations

The approach adopted by the task group to engage with people and listen to people's views has been excellent. When I heard about the task group, I thought it was a great idea, but I did not think I would be given the opportunity that I have to put my views forward. Organisations such as the police are used to these kinds of things, but I am just a bar owner. However, it has been excellent. I was able to put my views forward at a public evidence session. In addition, I have been able to contribute views and ideas via social media as well.

**Pete Terry, operator of two night-time venues in the city centre.**

I would like to thank Medway Council for this report and the hard work put into it.

I welcome the report recommendations which I and BIS officials have read with interest. The report adds to our knowledge base of debt and high cost credit and it will be carefully considered as a useful addition to the development of policy in this area.

**Jo Swinson MP,  
Minister for Employment  
Relations and Consumer  
Affairs**

## Medway Council

### Fair access to credit

**The judges** thought that this review, tackling debt and co-ordinated with the national campaign to end “legal loan sharking”, was an excellent example of scrutiny having an impact nationally as well as locally.

#### Impact:

- Promotion of resources relating to financial literacy and affordable lending and debt counselling, and provision of support for Medway residents affected by debt and unaffordable credit
- Promotion of local credit unions and detailed work with local banks to make Basic Bank Accounts easier to access
- Ongoing work by the council and its partners to highlight the dangers of loan sharks



# Involving communities

## Winner

### London Borough of Hackney

#### Improving young disabled people's access to universal services in Hackney

Scrutiny looked at universal youth services, and how these services meet the needs of disabled children. In particular, scrutiny looked at how council staff and voluntary organisations supported children with disabilities, and how parents of these children could be given confidence that the places they received care and support were safe and welcoming

**The judges** said that this piece of work demonstrated good outcomes, and an effective look at a challenging issue in a way that was fun and engaging to young people.

#### Impact:

- Awareness training for staff to support young people with additional needs has been incorporated into the new Young Hackney Service development programme
- The use of support services by this group of young people has risen from 3.5% to 7%, which is comparable to local estimates of the disabled population for this age group
- After discovering low usage by different community groups within the borough, there are now much stronger relationships with the Turkish and Kurdish communities
- The commission ran a project entitled 'Access for All' that used a local cinema to showcase images of wheelchair users and their experiences of accessibility of local services, and how accessibility can be improved. This project has since caught the interest of Transport for London, which has invited some of the young people to be part of their stakeholder group on improving disability outcomes on London transport.

Rather than spending time in Town Hall meetings [members] found interesting ways to hear the views of young disabled people, their families and local service providers first hand. [...]

As a result of that close listening the Commission's recommendations were clear and smart.

The review has allowed us to be more innovative and responsive to changing attitude in providing and delivering better outputs and enhanced outcomes.

**Toni Dawodu, Head of Integrated Services, LB Hackney and Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**

## Involving Communities - shortlisted

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Our surveys informed us that there should be action to tackle irresponsible dog owners. As Portfolio Holder I was grateful that the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group undertook an effective, realistic and engaging way to tackle the problem. [...]

I am extremely delighted and proud to endorse the work of all involved in promoting this exemplar project for the benefit of the residents of Tunbridge Wells.

**Councillor Paul Barrington-King (Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council)**

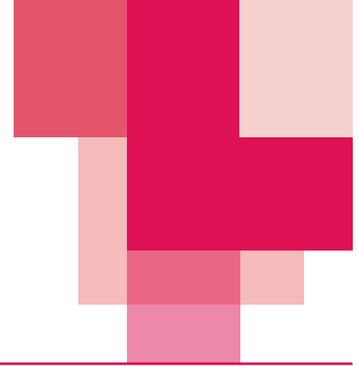
### Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

#### 'any bin will do' – tackling dog fouling in Tunbridge Wells

**The judges** thought that this work demonstrated how, by responding to significant public feedback on a live issue, scrutiny can have a real impact on a tightly-defined policy area – a good model for short, sharp work that can be replicated..

#### **Impact:**

- A saving of £4500 in dog fouling waste collection with the 'any bin will do' message propagated by the council
- Cabinet carried out a "bag and flag" scheme – whereby dog waste was placed in bags and then returned to where it had been dropped with a flag next to it - to highlight to everyone the scale of the problem and to engage dog owners and others about its impact
- The council has started enabling groups in local communities to administer the problem themselves using a toolkit provided by the council.



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## London Borough of Haringey

### Downhills Ward

**The judges** considered this an excellent example of campaigning scrutiny, using the planned closure of a female mental health ward at a local hospital to show scrutiny's power and influence on an issue that has arisen through members' ward work.

#### Impact:

- Finding that the announcement of closure was made without proper consultation, leading to the ward remaining open with a continued female inpatient treatment ward in Haringey
- Families and carers of patients felt listened to and engaged with, whilst the relationship between scrutiny and the MHT was further strengthened
- The profile of health scrutiny was raised within the mental health sector, with on-going communication between the panel and service user families and the voluntary and community sector

Scrutiny's involvement in this process was very helpful, acting as both objective facilitators of the dialogue and also as critical friend to the Trust, to highlight shortcomings in our process of engagement and ensure that these were addressed.

Scrutiny Committee members challenged the Trust in a number of ways and ensured a constructive outcome was achieved in a way and timeframe that would probably not have been possible without their involvement.

**Andrew Wright, Director of Strategic Development, Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust**

# Raising the Profile

The Committee investigation of Imperial's reporting break created international headlines as a result of the forensic investigation by its Members. As Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, it is important that in Westminster we have a Scrutiny committee which will hold healthcare providers to account in the best interests of our residents.

**Clr Rachael Robathan, Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, Westminster City Council**

The Committee investigation of Imperial's reporting break was very robust and thorough. As a result of their examination, they have raised the profile of Westminster's Health Scrutiny not only regionally but nationally.

**Rachel Wigley, Lead Director for City of Westminster, Adult Social Care**

## Winner

### Westminster City Council

#### Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust reporting break

In 2012, Imperial College Healthcare (ICH) took a waiting list reporting break, to assess patient safety throughout the referral process. Scrutiny's work uncovered that the Trust's data management had effectively 'lost' more than a thousand cancer referrals, with a patient backlog of over 3000, as a result of robust public questioning, FOI requests and data analysis.

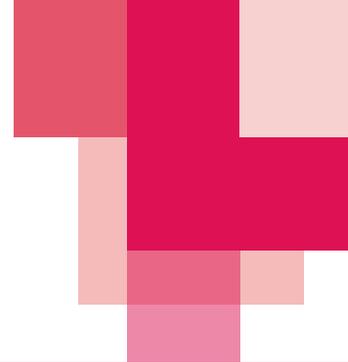
**The judges** considered this an excellent example of scrutiny's forensic potential, identifying deep-seated problems that the Trust was unwilling to recognise and securing real improvements in a high-profile way.

#### Impact:

- ICH agreed to raise the incidents with the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA), inform GPs about the loss of cancer referrals, and independently and externally assess the risks of clinical harm
- A local Clinical Commissioning Group decided to discontinue cancer referrals to the Trust (and divert to an alternative Trust) until the provider had improved data, backlogs and patient safety standards
- The Trust has reviewed procedures for receipt and management of referrals, and is also increasing the use of standardised procedures for the management of waiting lists
- The Trust's Quality and Patient Safety Team is using walk-arounds to promote incident reporting and identify any barriers to reporting.

## Raising the profile – shortlisted

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### Boston Borough Council

#### Social impact of population change in Boston

**The judges** thought that this review, investigating the impact of population change (particularly a sudden and dramatic influx of migrant workers) grasped the nettle of a hugely controversial issue, and successfully allowed a cross-party conversation about the development of the community, leading to a highly-accessible and extremely well-written report.

#### Impact:

- Facilitated a reasoned, evidence-based debate on the most talked about issue in the area
- Recognition at national government level – the report was discussed by David Cameron in a television interview, and the Home Office sent a team of investigators to Boston to learn from their approach
- More help and support to migrant communities to promote better outcomes in health and social care.

I have read lots of council reports and this was a revelation to me. It is the first council report I have ever read which actually, in plain English, defuses and throws a light on a situation which many people who don't know Boston and look at it from the outside think is potentially explosive. [...]

You did in one what it would take central Government a long time to do. Congratulations. You have dealt with your influx of migrants in an exemplary way.

**Alan Hardwick, Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner**

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The joint approach adopted by local Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees across Yorkshire and the Humber – that provided a unified voice of locally elected non-executives, representing over 5 million residents, has significantly helped [...]

The JHOSC's reports formed part of the key evidence provided to the High Court in the recent successful challenge of the decision on the future designation of surgical centres across England. I'm not aware of any other scrutiny reports being used in such a manner.

**Stuart Andrew MP**

## Yorkshire and the Humber Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### Review of children's congenital cardiac services in England

**The judges** were impressed by the strong local media coverage, the campaigning nature of the scrutiny work and the continuity of commitment to the work over time across all authorities, which centred on plans to reconfigure the delivery of children's heart services in Leeds over a number of years.

#### Impact:

- The reports provided a cornerstone of evidence submitted to the High Court in the Judicial Review brought by Save Our Surgery (SOS) Ltd. against the JCPCT.
- The work was recognised in a report from the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) and reinforced in a letter from the Secretary of State for Health, which stated, 'I agree with the Panel that the commitment and passion with which your Committee has scrutinised this subject is admirable.' (January 2012)

# Transforming services

## Winner

### South Somerset District Council

#### Council tax reduction: a local scheme

In response to the introduction of a localised scheme for removing people from an obligation to pay Council Tax, South Somerset's scrutiny function worked alongside an officer group to review the impact of such measures on the local community.

This joint working with executive-side officers approach was necessary because of the short timescale available to conduct preparatory work, but it paid dividends because it allowed responsibilities to be effectively divided, with members looking at the overall fairness of any new scheme. To allow them to make judgments on this point, members used evidence from the council's consultation on the changes, spoke to local people directly, and took evidence from a range of local charities.

**The judges** thought that the review demonstrated how scrutiny can be involved in big national issues, and how it can consider the political dimension and implications of major changes without being partisan.

#### Impact:

- Members were able to work with officers to design a fair local council tax scheme that balanced the needs of the whole community and provided stability both for local people and the authority
- The new scheme has been implemented successfully, with extensive consultation (and members' effective engagement with those consultation responses) meaning that the council has received very few queries about the new services
- The work secured buy in from across the council (with 59 of 60 councillors agreeing the final scheme at full Council) and across the community, building consensus on what was a profound and contentious change in local services.

The work of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group was incredibly important [...]

It meant that the decision wasn't just based around [the council's] financial requirements, it was based on affordability and fairness for all residents.

**Donna Parham, Assistant Director Finance and Corporate Services**

The work undertaken was highly detailed, of exceptional quality, and was the cornerstone of the final decision made by Full Council.

**Cllr Ric Pallister OBE, Leader**

# Transforming services - shortlisted

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The writing of the five-year business plan, financial projections and subsequent meetings with Northampton Borough Council helped us to focus on our objectives, core beliefs and vision.

**Toby Birch, Chair,  
Community Spaces  
Northampton.**

## Northampton Borough Council

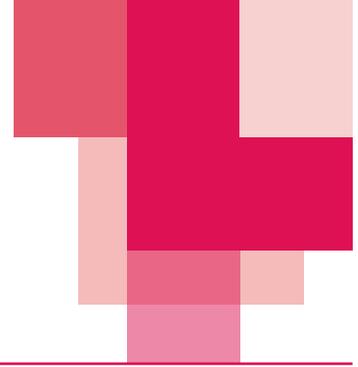
### Management of community centres

**The judges** thought that this work, which facilitated the transfer of a large number of community facilities from council to community control, demonstrated the contribution that scrutiny can make to implementing a key government policy around community asset transfer successfully at local level.

#### Impact:

- The development of two consortia to manage multiple centres (unique to England);
- The development of a robust, simple and transparent way to transfer assets to community organisations, resulting in the successful transfer of 19 of 21 centres to date (June 2013);
- Transferring responsibility for these services to local people has increased user satisfaction and reduced complaints;
- Delivery of £1 million in revenue savings to the council over five years and the leveraging into local communities of £200k of external funding.

Other approaches include committees who responsibilities are divided in different ways – for example, a “people” committee and a “places” committee.



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## Suffolk County Council

### Creation of a new heritage organisation

**The judges** thought that this review into a council plan to create a new heritage organisation – which led from councillors’ concerns about the long-term sustainability of such an approach - represented a good example of pre-decision scrutiny, resulting in substantive changes to a major proposal where a firm decision needed to be made as a matter of urgency.

#### Impact:

- More effective engagement with district and borough councils about the work;
- Consistent study and identification of risks attached to the project;
- A pause for more detailed study of potential proposals, when the focus up until that point had been to identify a solution quickly and implement it owing to financial pressures. The council is now committed to identifying a sustainable and realistic solution.

[Advice from scrutiny] framed our advice to Cabinet to adopt a different approach to the future for these services, working in partnership with cultural organisations, local authorities and other key stakeholders to develop a sustainable long term solution. [.]

Scrutiny Committee’s contribution enabled us to make the right decision for heritage in Suffolk, in a forum which was transparent and which ensured stakeholders were able to influence decisions.

**Sue Roper, Assistant Director, Economy Skills and Environment, Suffolk County Council**

# Working together

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This is all about better understanding and co-ordination of efforts to combat flooding in the future. It isn't just about money, it is how as agencies we work more intelligently with each other.

**Kerry Rickards, Chief Executive, Sedgemoor District Council**

## Winner

### South Somerset District Council

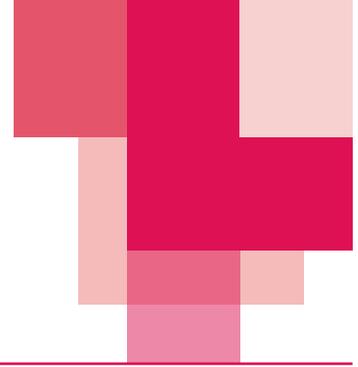
#### Somerset Flood Summit 2013

Following on from the significant flooding that affected parts of Somerset in 2012, many of the Somerset local authorities and other partners wished to meet with the key agencies to discuss the impact of the floods on local communities. However, agencies did not have the capacity to meet with 6 local authorities and more than 600 parish councils, not to mention other stakeholders. South Somerset suggested a joint scrutiny review to learn lessons from the flooding incidents – representing a good use of limited resources, and having at its centrepiece a Flooding Summit, to which all interested parties were invited.

**The judges** felt that this well-prepared and professional piece of work successfully engaged an extremely broad range of other councils, and key partners, on an issue of local contention, helping to cut through misunderstandings with no blame attached.

#### Impact:

- Significant joint working on a matter of community concern, overcoming some political tension
- A proper evidence base on which decision-makers can decide on priorities, rather than perceptions and media representations
- Much more effective communication with the general public around who is responsible for flood preparedness
- Clarification of the Environment Agency's position around the use of dredging.



### Telford and Wrekin

#### Scrutiny of welfare benefit reforms

**The judges** thought that this work on the impact of welfare reform (in particular the impact on the 28% of people in the borough in receipt of council tax or housing benefit) represented a good example of the executive reaching out to scrutiny to help with a piece of work that fed immediately and directly into plans for change.

#### Impact:

- Resulted in additional awareness-raising carried out with the public to minimise the local impact of the change
- Identified the most fair, and the most financially sustainable, option for a localised scheme
- Significant strengthening of the council's Discretionary Housing Payment scheme, including clarity for potential applicants over the process of applying for the fund and substantive recommendations on how the fund should be managed
- Changes to the planned replacement of the Social Fund, identified as a means to tackle fraud.

I [...] welcomed the opportunity of the joint scrutiny committee's reviewing these policies in detail before they were presented to Cabinet.

[T]he recommendations that they made in relation to the policies genuinely helped shape our thinking and the design of the final drafts.

Presenting the concepts to scrutiny early in the process and opening them up for robust examination enabled the workability and practicality of the proposals to be tested thoroughly at the design stage.

**Lee Higgins, Benefit Service Delivery Manager**

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Thanks to [the review, and other local partnership work] Haringey was chosen as the location to be the pioneer borough for [an] innovative online GP service backed by the Department of Health which will be designed by and for local men, particularly those in the hardest to reach groups, and delivered with the support of local GPs and other agencies.

[T]hat this [partnership approach] is possible in a borough with as many health challenges and inequalities as Haringey is a tribute to the scrutiny and the power of collaboration.

**Jim Pollard, Men's Health Forum**

## London Borough of Haringey

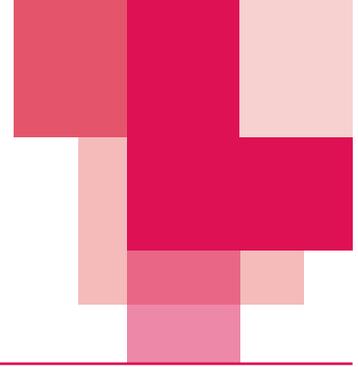
### Men's health: getting to the heart of the matter

**The judges** thought that this review into the significant life expectancy gap in the east of Haringey was a good, imaginative and wide-ranging piece of work which successfully addressed health inequalities, and the need to engage men in early intervention and prevention services.

#### Impact:

- Establishment of a multi-agency Men's Health Group to take forward the recommendations in the review – this has brought together a range of partners to share approaches and take forward a common agenda on men's health;
- A local pharmacy campaign;
- Agreement to pilot a Department of Health backed initiative designed to provide health checks to men, particularly those in high-risk groups.





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## Other high-quality work

Every year there are reviews that, although excellent in their own right, are not shortlisted because of the strength of competition. Here we highlight a few of them.

### **Lambeth**

– raising the profile. The Lambeth Health and Adult Social Services Committee (HASSC) has carried out a wide range of successful and effective work, led by LGiU Scrutineer of the Year Cllr Ed Davie. This has included engagement with the CQC over local domiciliary care providers, resulting in positive changes, and robust recommendations made following a poorly-executive service change consultation carried out by a local Trust leading that Trust to make changes to their systems for assessing the impacts on equalities of their decisions.

### **Communities and Local Government Committee, House of Commons**

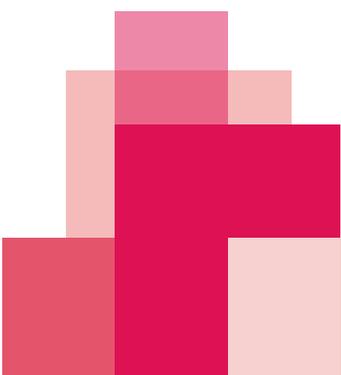
– innovation. The Committee’s investigation on “councillors on the frontline” required it to take an innovative approach to gathering evidence – particularly from those people who had decided not to stand for election as councillors. A combination of engagement through social media and an open discussion forum in Parliament led to effective recommendations which garnered wide coverage in the national press.

### **Wiltshire**

– transforming services. A OFSTED inspection in 2012 resulted in an “inadequate” grade for safeguarding. A multi-agency board was established to urgently consider possible changes, and at the same time scrutiny commenced – alongside the executive – its own investigation. This has resulted in recommendations, many of which have already been adopted, around strengthening the Improvement Plan for the service, improving the way that different professionals communicate with each other and putting in place a plan for scrutiny to increase its focus on safeguarding in the future.

### **Brighton and Hove**

– involving communities. This review of trans equalities was co-produced by councillors and recognised experts on trans people and the issues affecting them. Particular care was taken to open up a dialogue with the trans community about them and their needs, bearing in mind their wariness of officialdom and of negative media portrayals of them that could have accompanied the work. The work has provided a solid foundation on which future outcomes can be built.



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