



## Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission held on Thursday 25 July 2024 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Suzanne Abachor (Chair)  
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall  
Councillor Esme Dobson  
Councillor Jason Ochere

**OTHER MEMBERS  
PRESENT:**

**OFFICER  
SUPPORT:**

Jin Lim, Deputy Director of Public Health

Jamie Smyth - Specialty Registrar in Public Health

Marc Cook Customer Journey Lead - Southwark Repairs •  
Housing and Modernisation

Russell Jones - Assistant Director, Integrated Commissioning |  
Southwark Council and SEL ICB

Rupa Thakar - NHS South East London ICB

Julie Timbrell, Project Manager, scrutiny

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Charlie Smith and Nick Johnson.

### 2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

### **3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were none.

### **4. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting on 14 May 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

### **5. DAMP AND MOULD**

The chair invited the following officers to present the report circulated in advance:

- Jamie Smyth - Specialty Registrar in Public Health
- Marc Cook Customer Journey Lead - Southwark Repairs • Housing and Modernisation

In addition, Jin Lin, Deputy Director of Public Health was welcomed.

Members were then invited to asked questions and the following points were made:

- Assessments are made within an average of three days, with follow up after 5 weeks. The assessment can be virtual. Initial work may include washing down walls and can involve the tenant moving out, depending on severity and vulnerability.
- Social housing associations tenants are advised to contact their housing associations in the first instant, raise a complaint if needed, and ultimately to escalate to the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman can ask the council to inspect via our private rented services.
- Temporary accommodation properties are treated differently to permanent housing, though the services work together. A member raised concerns regarding temporary properties with damp and mould present and when people moved in.
- There is a backlog of 850 in system with 50 urgent cases of damp. The service is aiming to get these down to 400 before the cold weather, and address disrepair cases.
- There was a discussion on population data and the prevalence of damp amongst people with a Protected Characteristics, and higher rates of damp amongst the black population. Officers were asked about Southwark specific data. Officers said there are datasets that could be used and

offered to come back on this. There is a Southwark insight and intelligence report that will be looking at health inequalities and Public Health officers agreed with members that this is an important issue.

- The north of borough has more properties with damp, including particular blocks with problems and street properties. There is project based on particular blocks, but this will still do spot remedial work.
- Members asked to what extent damp is caused by unreliable heating systems and windows not fit for purposes. Officers responded that there are some blocks with district heating with problems and some with without. There are programmes providing fans and addressing windows. Data on damp did inform Kingswood Estate Major Works programme with specialist ventilation installed.
- Officers were asked if prevention would be cheaper given the NHS spends approximately 1% of the budget on damp related illness. Officers said that this is quite possibly the case – the reactive process is not cheap. The council will ultimately be moving to proactive work to address damp over time. The Deputy Director of Public Health said that there is work at the Health & Well-being Board on earlier detection and management of respiratory illness. There is also some economic modelling that demonstrates over time it will pay off to address damp at cause.

## **RESOLVED**

More information will be provided on the intersection between Southwark equalities data and damp.

## **6. COMMUNITY PHARMACY**

The chair welcome colleagues from the South East London (SEL) Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB) and the Council, and requested a verbal summary of the report circulated with the papers:

- Russell Jones - Assistant Director, Integrated Commissioning, |Southwark Council and SEL ICB
- Rupa Thakar - NHS South East London ICB

Members were then invited to ask questions and the following points were made:

- A member reported that pharmacies have complained that providing simple advice on ailments requires form filling, which is time consuming, and other matters raised in an email (provided in advance to ICB and tabled.) In response ICB personal said that the Pharmacy First scheme is administered

by government to ensure safe prescribing, and suggested pharmacies use the Local Pharmacy Committee to raise concerns. ICB personnel were asked if they would revert to local pharmacies to respond to complaints. ICB personnel said that they were unable to address issues related to national commissioning decisions, although they can facilitate communication.

- ICB personnel were asked for their perspective on pressures on local pharmacies. In response they said there are known pressures with medical shortages however they were not aware of any community pharmacies who intend to close locally. There are local conversations around the digital interface and facilitating improved communication between pharmacies and GP practices.
- Members asked about the drivers of shortage of medicines, such as Brexit. ICB personnel said that this is a nationally commissioned medicine programme, and they have oversight of national supply lines, and are better placed to address the reasons. There is a programme of raising alerts to manage this locally. A member said her experience was that there were shortages and sometimes she resorted to social media to access medicines. The ICB personnel acknowledged the difficulties to patients shortages can cause and said there is a local programme to ensure that there is better communication between pharmacies on availability to improve the patient experience.

## **7. ACCESS TO TOILETS SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT**

The completed scrutiny review report was noted.

The scrutiny project manager reported that this went to cabinet on the 22 July 2024. Loos for Southwark had made a deputation to cabinet on the same evening in support of the report. The minutes recorded a commitment by Councillor Kieron Williams, leader of the council, to develop a Southwark publicly accessible toilet plan, to come back to a future cabinet meeting, working in partnership with the deputation.

The Commission welcomed this and noted their appreciation for all the work involved in producing the report by members, officers and Loos for Southwark.

## **8. WORK PROGRAMME**

The work plan was noted and the following items will be added:

- A further work on the Damp topic, including follow up on equalities data from Public Health.
- A report on children's respite care and cost impact of the ending the provision at Orient Street.

- Cancer early treatment and prevention.