

NEREO Regional Member/Officer Scrutiny Network

Potential Future Topics

1. The Impact of Brexit on Local Government

The government has committed to leaving the European Union by 29 March 2019. This will have far-reaching consequences over a whole range of areas. The Communities and Local Government Committee has been examining the impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU and the role local authorities could play post-Brexit. Our Network could examine what added value scrutiny could provide in ensuring that sufficient plans are in place to mitigate against any adverse impacts and take advantage of any opportunities.

2. Private sector housing

The private rented sector is a problematic area for many local authorities. Parliament is currently examining whether councils have sufficient powers to deal with bad landlord practices. Our Network could help share best practice and explore how scrutiny could help make improvements in this area.

3. School accountability

The landscape for the provision of education is changing with the academisation of schools and the introduction of multi-academy trusts. Our Network could explore the role that overview and scrutiny could play in supporting schools and holding the education sector to account.

4. Safeguarding and looked after children

The number of looked after children is increasing nationally with the North East experiencing the largest increases in the last 10 years. The welfare of all children is a top priority and a high-risk area for all local authorities. There have been some well-publicised safeguarding failures in other parts of the country in recent years. The Network could explore what steps overview and scrutiny can take to ensure the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements and also the impact of increases in looked after children.

5. Supporting major change and transformation

Local authorities have been experiencing the effects of austerity for over seven years now. Reductions in government funding have meant that councils have had to make substantial cuts to their budgets. Whilst local authorities initially targeted easy to achieve savings, it has become increasingly more difficult to identify further cuts. Most local authorities have now embarked on their own transformation programmes involving the fundamental rethinking of the way in which services are provided. This frequently involves exploring alternative service delivery models and harnessing digitisation. Our Network could help to share ideas about transformation between local authorities and explore how overview and scrutiny could be used to best effect.

6. Autism

Local authorities, NHS bodies and NHS Foundation Trusts have specific statutory duties regarding people with autism living in their area. These relate to appointing an autism lead, carrying out both awareness and specialist training, developing clear pathways for diagnosis and assessment and commissioning services, which are appropriate to their population. Our Network could explore how we could scrutinise both the local authority and local NHS bodies to ensure that we are complying with the law regarding people with autism.