Draft Memorandum of Understanding

Participating Parties

The Memorandum of Understanding is agreed between:

- Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)
- Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- NHS Trusts and Foundation Trust operating with the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin area
- Providers of primary care and public health commissioned by NHS England, ICBs or local authorities
- Additional consultees may include Healthwatch Shropshire, Healthwatch Telford & Wrekin, and voluntary/community sector partners

Purpose of the Memorandum of understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding sets out the shared expectations, working principles, and processes that support effective scrutiny of NHS services by Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin's Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC). Its purpose is to strengthen the voice and experience of local communities in the planning and delivery of health services; to provide clear definitions of the roles, responsibilities, and behaviours expected between the JHOSC and NHS bodies; to promote transparent, early, and collaborative engagement on service development, variation, and reconfiguration; and to ensure continuity and consistency in scrutiny arrangements during periods of personnel or structural change within NHS organisations.

Principles for Effective Joint Working

All parties commit to the following shared principles

1. **Outcome-Focused:** Work together to secure safe, effective, high-quality health services that meet local needs.
2. **Balanced:** Provide information and evidence that allow scrutiny to challenge constructively and fairly.
3. **Inclusive:** Ensure scrutiny reflects the voices and experiences of diverse communities, including seldom-heard groups.
4. **Collaborative:** Promote early, ongoing dialogue between NHS bodies and scrutiny to resolve issues locally and transparently.

5. **Evidence-Informed:** Share high-quality, accessible, and "lay-friendly" data in a timely manner.
6. **Transparent:** Ensure meetings, decisions, and documentation are open to the public except where legally restricted.

Roles and Responsibilities

The JHOSC will:

- Require NHS representatives to attend meetings and provide information as needed.
- Make evidence-based recommendations to NHS organisations regarding service improvement.
- Act as a statutory consultee on substantial service variations.
- Maintain a work programme focused on Strategic Oversight, Public Accountability and Collaborative Working

NHS Bodies (ICB, SaTH and providers) will:

- Notify the JHOSC of emerging proposals for service change at the earliest opportunity.
- Engage constructively in meetings and support scrutiny's role as part of system accountability.
- Respect scrutiny recommendations and respond formally where required.

Defining 'Substantial Variation'

To prevent ambiguity or delay, parties agree to jointly assess whether a proposed change constitutes a "substantial variation" requiring formal consultation.

Considerations include:

- Degree of change in service type, volume, or delivery model
- Impact on travel times or service accessibility
- Potential effect on patient outcomes
- Level of public interest or concern

Where disagreement arises, parties will work together to seek local resolution before considering escalation.

Early Notification

NHS bodies will notify the JHOSC as soon as proposals are being explored, even before formal decision-making.

Information Requests from the JHOSC

- Documents must be written in lay-friendly language.
- Key Lines of Enquiry (KLoEs) should be shared in advance of meetings.
- Data must include impacts, risks, mitigations, and equality considerations.
- Where topics require confidentiality, that the representatives attend informal meetings with the Committee where the meeting and a high-level summary will be shared at the next public meeting.

Process for Substantial Variation Consultations

Where a change is deemed substantial:

- A clear consultation plan will be shared with the JHOSC.
- The JHOSC will participate in shaping scope, evidence requirements, and public involvement methods.
- NHS bodies will present the final proposal and respond to scrutiny feedback and recommendations within 28 days.

Statutory Escalation Process:

1. Parties will seek resolution locally through informal discussion in the first instance.
2. Where necessary, the Chair of the JHOSC and senior NHS system leaders will meet to resolve matters.
3. Statutory escalation routes will only be used where all local routes are exhausted

Continuity and Version Control

This Memorandum of Understanding serves as a standing reference document to ensure continuity in the way scrutiny and engagement are conducted. All

participating organisations agree to provide induction briefings for new staff and elected members, ensuring they are familiar with the contents and expectations set out within this MoU.

Reviewing the Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed as required by the JHOSC and NHS partners to ensure it remains current and effective. Mid-year reviews may also be undertaken where significant system or legislative changes occur, or where learning from major service variation processes indicates that updates are necessary.