What can we learn from Hackney, Doncaster, Mid-Staffs, Rotherham…
WAO Shared Learning Seminar
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When will we ever learn?

- Courage to do the right thing
- Political AND managerial leadership
- Evidence-based independent-minded scrutiny
- Challenging primacy of realpolitik
Hackney in 2000

Councillors jailed for Britain’s biggest vote fraud

How corruption destroyed Hackney

The current round of cuts is just the start. With £50 million of cuts over the next three years none of our jobs or conditions are safe.

Hackney chaos threat as 3,000 plan to strike

Byers poised to take over Hackney

Hackney given ultimatum

Councillors jailed for election fraud

Council given 14 days to respond to calls for major improvements

Make the government give back the money – Sack mad Max not the workers.

A nightmare on Mare Street

Strike now to win

Evening Standard News Extra
12 Jan 2001
Page 6
Hackney Town Hall
Section 114 notice 2000
Hackney Town Hall
budget night 2005
“Good governance is about running things properly. It is the
means by which a public authority shows it is taking
decisions for the good of the people of the area, in a fair,
equitable and open way.

It also requires standards of behaviour that support good
decision making – collective and individual integrity,
openness and honesty.

It is the foundation for the delivery of good quality services
that meet all local people’s needs. It is fundamental to
showing public money is well spent.

Without good governance councils will struggle to improve
services when they perform poorly.”
Mid-Staffs – Francis report recommendations for scrutiny

43 - Those charged with oversight and regulatory roles in healthcare should monitor media reports about the organisations for which they have responsibility.

147 - Guidance should be given to promote the co-ordination and co-operation between local Healthwatch, Health and Wellbeing Boards, and local government scrutiny committees.

149 - Scrutiny committees should be provided with appropriate support to enable them to carry out their scrutiny role, including easily accessible guidance and benchmarks.

150 - Scrutiny committees should have powers to inspect providers rather than relying on local patient involvement structures to carry out this role, or should actively work with those structures to trigger and follow up inspections where appropriate rather than receiving reports without comment or suggestion for action.
Rotherham – Jay report very critical of scrutiny

Even more significant is the apparent lack of effective scrutiny exercised by these several groups or bodies, and least of all by the Scrutiny Panels. Scrutiny in its widest sense is an essential component of Cabinet government. Rarely does it appear from the minutes that councillors have held officers to account by checking the evidence for proposals or asking whether their ends could be met in other ways. It may be that the minutes are written in bland, non-specific, language, but that does nothing to reassure the public that genuine accountability is being exercised. It is important that councillors test proposals by reference to their broad experience and their knowledge of the Borough and their own constituents. There should be nothing threatening about this; good officers should welcome challenge as a central part of local democracy.
Politics and realpolitik

Recent CfPS Survey:

• 33% said the leader appoints all scrutiny chairs
• Nearly 30% said scrutiny never or hardly ever robustly challenges executive (better at challenging officers)
• Nearly 75% authorities have a large majority – is this a problem?

“Leadership culture of evading challenge - and feeding fish to scrutiny to keep them busy. Probably a result of large political majority.”

“Decisions made at Group - large majority do not want to show dissent in public”