

Report to: **East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)**
Date: **17th June 2010**
By: **Assistant Director - Legal and Democratic Services**
Title of report: **Choice and Booking update**
Purpose of report: **To update HOSC on the development of Choice and Booking in East Sussex.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOSC is recommended to:

- 1. Consider the latest position on Choice and Booking and question whether there has been satisfactory action taken to address performance issues.**
 - 2. Identify whether HOSC requires any further reports on this topic.**
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1. Background

1.1 Choice and Booking is a national programme that combines electronic booking and a choice of place, date and time for first outpatient appointments. This forms part of the national policy that patients will be offered a choice of treatment at any NHS Trust, Foundation Trust or independent sector provider which can provide the service at nationally agreed costs and standards.

1.2 The development of the programme has been on the HOSC agenda since the system's launch in March 2005. At the HOSC meeting on 1st December 2005 the Committee agreed to maintain a watching brief on Choice and Booking to address particular concerns that appeared to be hindering full and effective implementation.

2. Performance to date

2.1 HOSC followed progress in 2005 and 2006 and considered the take up of Choice and Booking to be disappointing. However, towards the end of 2006 HOSC noted an improvement with an average of 24% of GP to consultant referrals being made through Choice and Booking in October 2006.

2.2 On revisiting Choice and Booking in March 2008, HOSC noted that uptake continued to be an issue with still only 20-30% of East Sussex GP referrals being handled through the system compared to a national target of 90%. Although there was some scepticism about whether the 90% target is appropriate, NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald (ESDW) and Hastings and Rother (H&R) were hopeful that local rates would be beyond 50% by June 2008 as a number of improvements were beginning to be rolled out which were expected to increase the number of referrals made through the system.

2.3 In September 2008, HOSC noted that the planned improvements had not yielded the significant increase in referrals through Choice and Booking which had been anticipated. Shortly after March there had been an initial improvement to 40% but this had gradually fallen back to 35% in Hastings and Rother and 32% in East Sussex Downs and Weald. HOSC noted that the Strategic Health Authority had set a very challenging target for PCTs to reach 75% by December 2008, thus sending a clear message that a big improvement was needed.

2.4 In March 2009, the Head of Primary Care for NHS ESDW/H&R reported that there had been an improvement in performance at the start of 2009 and that some practices were achieving 50% to 60% of their referrals through the choice and booking system. However, overall rates were approximately 30% in Hastings and Rother and 35% in East Sussex Downs and Weald and there was concern that performance was dropping off again. Ongoing issues included:

- Problems with East Sussex Hospitals Trust's Patient Administration System, leading to problems for GPs in accessing the consultant and clinic required
- System failures of the choice and booking system which damaged the confidence of GPs and patients

2.5 Actions being taken at that time included:

- Addressing the problems with the Patient Administration System software
- Continuing the incentive scheme for GPs
- Running a Strategic Health Authority funded publicity campaign to inform patients about their right to a choice (with less focus on electronic booking)
- Working with GPs to identify how they wish to scrutinise and manage their referrals and considering the introduction of systems to manage referrals

2.6 It was stated that choice and booking was no longer a priority national target but that performance was still being monitored locally and by the Strategic Health Authority.

3. Latest update and issues arising

3.1 Murray King, Head of Primary Care at NHS ESDW/H&R has supplied an update to HOSC on the latest position with Choice and Booking (slides attached at appendix 1). This details ongoing performance issues with rates of referral through the system still well below national and regional averages, despite the implementation of the strategies outlined to HOSC in March 2009.

3.2 The Committee may wish to consider whether it is satisfied that everything possible is being done to improve uptake of Choice and Booking. Given the ongoing problems with the electronic system, HOSC may wish to determine whether there is evidence that patients are being offered a choice of hospital and appointment date/time, even if this is not through the system itself.

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Update to HOSC – June 10

- Choice and booking





