



Health Scrutiny in East Sussex Newsletter July 2006

No. 011

Maternity services closure?



HOSC is extremely concerned to learn that there is a significant possibility that a maternity unit may be temporarily closed at either Conquest Hospital or Eastbourne District General Hospital. At present, HOSC has not been presented with any arguments or evidence to support the feasibility or sustainability of locating maternity services at just one of the two hospital sites but it is aware that such proposals are highly likely to emerge from consultation later in the autumn.

Councillor Lacey, Chairman of HOSC has taken the matter up with Kim Hodgson, Chief Executive, East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust. 'Local feeling on this matter is extremely high and determined. Any short term closure of a maternity unit at either site would be viewed by HOSC as a monumental breach of faith by the Trust', he said.

Kim Hodgson has confirmed that it is likely that the Trust may have to "single site" as an interim measure following the resignation of two consultants and another

going part-time. However, the consultants have now assured Kim Hodgson that they can cope with one locum and will cover both existing sites. The Trust is keeping the situation under review and so will HOSC.

Fit for the future



Debbie Bamford, East Sussex Transitional Lead Chief Executive has given HOSC a clear insight into future plans for health services in the County. Investment is needed in people, skills and technology rather than bricks, mortar and beds. In many cases care should be provided at home as this is more cost effective and better meets the needs of patients. Better use of community facilities is needed to free up hospital services for those people most in need.

Initiatives being investigated include:

- GPs keeping registers of patients with long term conditions who have previously had frequent short term stays in hospital.

- Community matrons working with GPs to provide home care.
- Palliative care provided at home.
- Planned care, such as day surgery to be addressed and follow-up appointments where appropriate to be done at GP practices.
- GPs treating some specialist conditions e.g. diabetes, skin complaints.
- Some outpatients' appointments transferring to GP practices.

HOSC recognises that implementing these plans – particularly within the current tough financial environment – will be challenging. Disruption may occur across some areas and some patients may be inconvenienced. It is a three year project, with any significant changes happening towards the end of this period.

The 'Local Health Economy' will ultimately decide where services will be located – this includes the mental health services, as well as PCTs, ambulance trust and the acute services. The Strategic Health Authority will require the final arrangements to have a 'good fit' with service provision in neighbouring areas.

HOSC is being consulted on any proposed changes and is working closely with Health colleagues to ensure major concerns of the residents of East Sussex are highlighted.

Open wide



Following the launch of the new NHS dental contract in April 2006, dentistry in East Sussex has been under the HOSC spotlight. The committee is particularly concerned that Uckfield lacks NHS dentists. A Sussex Downs and Weald PPI

Forum public meeting highlighted this along with a range of other issues. However, the Chairman of the Local Dental Committee considers that PCTs in East Sussex have done as much as they can to maximise the level of NHS dentistry but the profession is basically unhappy with the contract.

Debbie Bamford, Transitional Lead Chief Executive for East Sussex told HOSC that the new contract for dentists has meant that the PCT has had to re-provide services. Stopgaps for provision of dentist care in Uckfield have been provided in Lewes and Crowborough. A review of the position will be undertaken in September 2006. HOSC is concerned that there is a lack of resources in dentistry to meet the unmet needs of those not currently actively seeking treatment. HOSC is monitoring progress and will investigate further in the autumn.

Improvements for carers



Good progress has been made on implementing recommendations in HOSC's April 2005 Carers' Review. Highlights include:

- The GP carers' protocol is in place extensively across East Sussex.
- Adult Social Care now has a central contact centre. Carers' issues are incorporated in staff training and the number of completed carers' assessments is currently running at 200 per month compared to 100 per month in September 2005.
- The Carers Passport is being finalised and the re-launch is planned for autumn 2006.

- A successful carers grant and short break voucher scheme is in place.
- A Hospital Liaison Worker is in post to support carers who are in-patients.
- A new carers' information pack has been produced specially for carers supporting people with mental health problems.

These successes are tempered by some concerns:

- The Single Assessment Process appears to be still causing problems.
- Although 1,681 carers' assessments have been completed over the last 12 months, there are an estimated 50,000 carers in East Sussex.
- There are some concerns about the underlying primary care awareness of carers. However, PCTs are undertaking a lot of work to promote awareness of carers.

A young carers' review was completed by ESCC Children's Services in May 2006 and HOSC will be seeking to play a part in monitoring the outcomes.

Bed blocking update

Delayed transfers of care cases (bed blocking) have been reduced by 50% during the previous year. There were 63 cases at the end of June 2006 which HOSC believes is still disappointingly high. The PCTs and East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust are working with Adult Social Care to get the number down further. HOSC will continue to monitor progress and will take evidence from PCTs and Adult Social Care on 22 September 2006. It has already heard evidence from the acute trust.

Mental health issues

Following the formation of the Sussex Partnership NHS Trust, HOSC is retaining an independent scrutiny of mental health and learning disability issues in East Sussex. HOSC is looking at;

- level of co-operation with other health and social care bodies
- alcohol related hospital stays/discharges
- Seaford Day Hospital – current and future use
- Homefield Place, Seaford – future plans
- actions to promote good mental health and well-being for older people.

Discussing these and other issues will be a key component of the HOSC meeting on Friday 22 September 2006.

Personnel changes



Following his appointment as Mayor of Eastbourne in May 2006, Councillor Colin Belsey has stood down from HOSC.

Councillor Lacey said, 'We were delighted to learn of Cllr Belsey's mayoral position and we wish him every success in his new role. Through his time on HOSC, Colin made a prodigious contribution particularly as the link member with Eastbourne Downs PCT PPI Forum.'

Councillor Anne Angel has succeeded Cllr Belsey as Eastbourne Borough Council's HOSC representative.



'Anne brings a wealth of experience to HOSC and we are delighted to have her on board,' said Councillor Lacey. Anne has had a varied career including being Worthing Town Centre Manager and Project Manager of Eastbourne's inaugural 'Airbourne' event.

Fiona Allan has succeeded Annie Petch as HOSC Committee Manager.

Balancing the books

The Centre for Public Scrutiny's latest publication *'Balancing the Books: a guide to NHS finance for health overview and scrutiny committees'* is an easy to understand guide to the topic. The 24 page booklet can be downloaded from www.cfps.org.uk/publications

HOSC 2006/2007

East Sussex County Council:

Cllr Bob Lacey OBE Chairman
Cllr David Rogers OBE Vice Chairman
Cllr Beryl Healy
Cllr Philip Howson
Cllr Carl Maynard
Cllr Ruth O'Keeffe
Cllr John Wilson

Eastbourne Borough Council
Cllr Anne Angel

Hastings Borough Council
Cllr Eve Martin

Lewes District Council
Cllr Ralph Taylor

Rother District Council
Cllr Christopher Starnes

Wealden District Council
Cllr Diane Phillips

Voluntary services' representatives:

Mr Ralph Chapman - Age Concern

**Mrs Rosemary Iddenden -
Alzheimer's Society**



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Future HOSC meetings

10am Friday 22 September 2006 Lewes

10am Thursday 30 Nov. 2006 Lewes

HOSC is managed by East Sussex County Council and works in partnership with Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Rother District Council and Wealden District Council