



Health Scrutiny in East Sussex Newsletter

No. 013
January 2007

Happy New Year

The HOSC Chairman, members and officers would like to wish you and your colleagues a prosperous New Year.

Will the future ever arrive?

Consultation on plans for health services in East Sussex, under 'Fit for the Future', will not start before the end of January 2007. Nick Yeo, Chief Executive, East Sussex PCTs and Councillor John Barnes, Chairman, East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT briefed HOSC on the latest position. The committee learned that there should be consultation on several different scenarios. The boards of East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT and Hastings and Rother PCT will make the final decision on the services but any decision will not be taken until May 2007 at the earliest.

There will be far reaching proposals and the PCTs want to ensure that they are sensible, robust and appropriate. The key drivers are:

- clinical quality and safety
- meeting patients needs
- accessibility
- best use of the finite set of resources.

HOSC is particularly concerned about what would happen if the PCTs' preferred option for a service site was unacceptable to local people. Mr Yeo confirmed that it is very unlikely that a single option will be put forward. Consultation would take account of the views of the public and clinicians and the final decision would have to be the best fit.



Speculation and rumour surrounds health service plans particularly obstetrics. Mr Yeo confirmed that the alternatives had not yet been agreed let alone decided upon regarding obstetrics.

HOSC asked for evidence that shifting hospital care into the community is reducing demand on hospital resources. Mr Yeo said that considerable steps forward had been made in the way hospital services were managed particularly in Accident and Emergency and bed management. Demand on services is not increasing as much now although there has not been a decrease in demand. Future plans will aim to provide care around the patient and make sure

people use the right services and that they are accessible. PCTs are working with the acute hospital on this e.g. single point telephone access, single accident and emergency/PCT reception area which directs patients to appropriate care.

HOSC wants to see replacement services put in place before closing units or beds, and cites the closure of All Saints Hospital and the delay in Seaford Health Centre's expansion plans as examples of poor practice in this respect. Mr Yeo confirmed that the PCTs take a holistic approach and aim to provide the right care in the right setting. Acute care settings and community services need to be looked at in tandem. The PCTs have to make judgements on the timing of closure and opening of services and this does include double running where feasible. PCTs have to make this part of their financial plans. This will be a challenge.

HOSC is keeping an eagle eye on 'Fit for the Future' developments. It is committed to ensuring that proposals take account of the local view and are acceptable to the people of East Sussex.

Firm 'no' to SHA's joint committee proposal

South East HOSCs Chairmen are in regular discussions with representatives of the South East Coast Strategic Health Authority (SHA) and PCTs over 'Fit for the Future' plans. The Chairmen are unanimously opposed to the SHA's suggestion to form a region wide joint health overview and scrutiny committee to consider 'Fit for the Future' options. This is because it is not appropriate (on the grounds of local accountability) nor feasible (because of the sheer volume of evidence) for one South East region joint committee to be able to consider properly the detailed arguments for health service changes across several counties.

More choosing and booking



Choose and Book, the new online system for GPs to book hospital appointments, is currently running at 600 appointments per week across East Sussex. This compares with 80/90 a week in September 2006. HOSC was pleased to note this improvement in a briefing by Terri Agnew, Choose and Book Programme Manager, East Sussex Area.

However, the committee learned that East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust has taken orthopaedics 'off menu' which means it will not accept Choose and Book appointments for this speciality. HOSC hopes this is just a temporary measure. Although GPs have alternatives there are a lot of orthopaedic referrals and this step taken by the Trust concerns HOSC.

The Choose and Book programme management team aims to have the system fully integrated into mainstream working practices by March 2007. HOSC welcomed progress and will review the system's performance in June 2007.

Hello, world, how are you?

HOSC is keen to strengthen the publicity on its work. Its latest initiative is to broadcast HOSC meetings live on the internet. The first broadcast was the meeting on 30 November. The recording is available on the HOSC website: www.eastsussexhealth.org

Improvements for young carers



HOSC is enormously encouraged to see young carers' issues being addressed through implementation of recommendations in Children's Services' review of young carers. Sandy Thomas, Policy Planning Manager, Disabled Children and John Tovey, Joint Head, Children's Services Commission Unit updated HOSC on progress in the young carers' development and improvement plan. Liz Fenton, Chief Executive, Care for the Carers supports the direction of travel set out in the plan and HOSC is continuing to monitor progress.

Initiatives include:

- The Common Assessment Framework to be introduced across children's services from April 2007 and into the Young Carers Service to help identify young carers.
- Setting up a Young Carers Strategy Group and this will include school representation.
- Hospitals adopting a new protocol which looks much more widely at a patient's needs including carer involvement.
- Awareness raising programme with GPs.

The work on young carers complements HOSC's review of carers which was completed in April 2005.

Community Dental Services

HOSC has endorsed proposals to close Community Dental Services (CDS) clinics in Crowborough and Heathfield and for

patients to be treated at the enhanced Uckfield and Hailsham clinics. However, the endorsement is subject to the service consulting with all affected patients and resolving any additional transport requirements. The closures are part of the PCTs' programme to streamline services to concentrate activity in fewer clinics so that the use of space and staff can be maximised to the advantage of patients and the service.

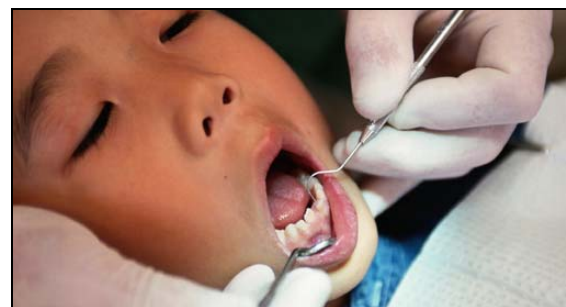
Phil Hamlin, Acting Clinical Director for Community Dental Services and Emergency Dental Services, East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT briefed HOSC.

Benefits highlighted:

- improved waiting times (after 12 months: Heathfield from 10 to 8 weeks and Crowborough from 24 to 17 weeks)
- service quality improved
- no reduction in budget which means savings can provide better services
- no reduction in staff, indeed improved staff efficiency
- no impact on Emergency Dental Services clinics in Hailsham, Lewes and Hastings.

HOSC is maintaining a watching brief on appointment waiting times for CDS patients which it considers to be poor even with the anticipated improvements.

Check-up on NHS dentistry



The impact of the new NHS dental contract is being assessed by HOSC. Jane Hewitt, Dental Services Development Manager and Andrew Demetriades, Director of Commissioning and Primary, East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT advised HOSC that:

- The PCT and dentists are still embedding new contract changes.
- Generally there is a match between provision and need.
- Higher number of dentists are accepting NHS patients.
- Contract disputes have been reduced or resolved.
- There has been no major impact in localities of rejected contracts.
- Urgent care provision is under review.

HOSC is continuing to monitor progress of the new dental contract.

Victory on LINKs

HOSC has claimed victory over a Government u-turn on plans to curb public and patient inspection of health services.

The Department of Health had proposed replacing patient and public involvement (PPI) forums with local involvement networks, known as LINKs, which would not have the right to inspect hospitals and other NHS institutions.

But since setting out the proposal in the consultation paper "A Stronger Local Voice" last July, ministers have been met with opposition to the plan to restrict inspection rights.

The Department of Health has now outlined new plans, in a summary document of more than 500 responses to the consultation, to "provide LINKs with the power to enter health and social care premises (with some exceptions) and to observe and assess the nature and quality of services". HOSC was one of many organisations that opposed the plan.

Chairman Cllr Bob Lacey said: "This is a victory for all those people who knew that it was a bad idea to take away public and patient inspection of health services. We are pleased the Government has listened to the significant body of opposition to this plan. This can only be good news for the future of the NHS."

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
 Chairman, Age Concern East Sussex
Mrs Rosemary Iddenden
 Branch Manager, Alzheimer's Society

Next HOSC meeting

10am Friday 23 March 2007

Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes.

Contact:

Claire Lee, Scrutiny Lead Officer
 East Sussex County Council
 Room C6F, County Hall
 St Anne's Crescent, Lewes
 East Sussex BN7 1SW

Tel: 01273 481327

Email: claire.lee@eastsussex.gov.uk

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