



Health Scrutiny in East Sussex Newsletter No. 19

April 2008

This newsletter is produced by East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and provides an update on the progress made with Health Scrutiny in East Sussex.

Maternity plans referred to Secretary of State



The Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson, has received HOSC's referral of East Sussex PCTs' Fit for the Future decision to have a single site for obstetrics, special baby care and in-patient gynaecology services in Hastings and a midwife-led-unit in Eastbourne.

Mr Johnson is expected to pass the referral to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP). The IRP is a national panel comprising clinical representatives, NHS management representatives and lay representatives which provides advice to the Secretary of State on contested proposals for health service change.

Cllr Tidy said, 'The referral was supported by a wealth of detailed evidence and we

expect the IRP to undertake a full review. We hope that all the options will be fairly considered, and a high level of independent scrutiny brought not only to the clinical issues, but to the preferences of local people.'

HOSC expects the process to take around six to eight months if the IRP undertakes a full review. The referral letter and accompanying evidence is available on the HOSC website:

www.eastsussexhealth.org

Choice matters



The impact of the new online system set to 'revolutionise' the booking of hospital appointments has been mixed. Figures show that only 25% to 30% of bookings in the county are via the 'Choice and Booking' initiative against a national target

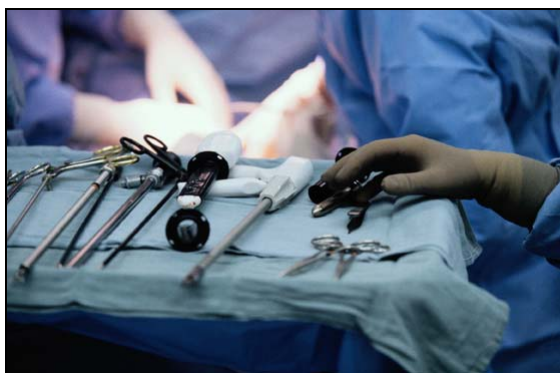
of 90% and East Sussex is in the country's bottom performing 15-20 PCTs.

However, some GP practices in East Sussex are achieving 80% of bookings using the system and HOSC has learned that a concerted drive is underway to boost bookings through the county to an average of at least 50% by November 2008.

John Vesely, Head of Primary Care and Mark Lavender, Interim Choice and Booking Project Manager outlined the strategy for improvement to HOSC. Mr Vesely explained that the implementation of the system had been beset by a number of problems including inadequate hardware, software incompatibility and a lack of user friendliness. As a consequence GPs had lost faith in the system. The PCTs are confident that many of the teething problems have been resolved and the system's capabilities have now been enhanced. A roll-out programme of improvements is underway.

HOSC has demanded another progress report be presented at its September meeting to determine whether referrals are on course to reach the 50%.

Fit for West Sussex Future



Work by the Joint HOSC formed to consider West Sussex PCT and Brighton and Hove PCT's Fit for the Future proposals is in the final strait and the committee will agree its final report and recommendations in May. The consultation process has concluded and a

number of alternative options were put forward by the public and stakeholders which is viewed as a positive development.

West Sussex PCT commissioned Sir Graeme Catto, President of the General Medical Council, to analyse and assess these options. They included a new model which would retain the majority of Accident & Emergency services at each hospital. Sir Graeme commended this model to the PCT as it has the support of local clinicians. The Joint HOSC will take Sir Graeme's conclusions on board as it deliberates over its own recommendations.

The PCTs are expected to decide on the preferred model in May and consider service locations in June. The final decision on the future pattern of services in West Sussex is expected in July 2008.

Councillor David Rogers and Councillor Diane Philips are the East Sussex HOSC representatives on the Joint HOSC and Councillor Sylvia Tidy is the substitute. The councillors ensure that they bring the East Sussex dimension to the review, in particular the ramifications of any changes to services at the Princess Royal Hospital, Haywards Heath.

Information about the PCTs' consultation is available on the NHS website www.southeastcoastff.nhs.uk.

In-patients are out

Reduced reliance on in-patient beds is the theme as Sussex Partnership NHS Trust's strategy for older people's mental health services is implemented. Developments in treatments and therapies have allowed the Trust to reduce the need for this type of institutional care and release funds to expand community based provision in line with national policy.

The Trust also aims to ensure older people with organic mental illness (age-related conditions like dementia) receive care in separate units from those with functional mental illness (conditions

occurring at any age such as personality disorders or depression).

Andrew Dean, Associate Director Older People's and Forensic Services, outlined plans for the next phase of the service changes. This involves the proposed closure of Beechwood in-patient 16 bed acute assessment unit in Uckfield for patients with organic mental health problems. The funding released would be used to pay for the continuation of an extended hours service and to increase the capacity within community services.



HOSC also learned that, as a temporary measure, Milton Court in-patient 14 bed acute assessment unit in Eastbourne would then be moved to Beechwood. This move, likely to be for 2-3 years, is pending the identification of a suitable site in Eastbourne which will be a new in-patient centre.

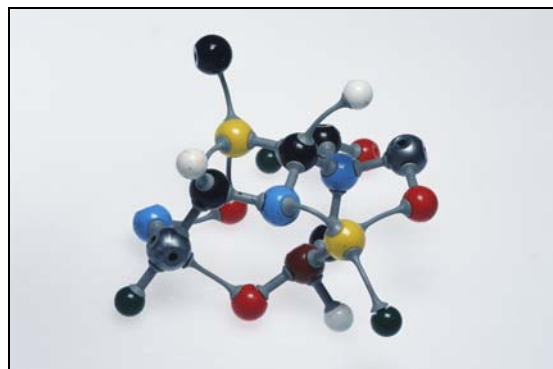
HOSC determined that the Trust's plans raised a number of issues which needed to be explored in more depth and required a suitable consultation plan to be in place.

To this end it has established a task-force comprising Councillor Beryl Healy, Councillor Eve Martin and Ralph Chapman. The task-force will report back to HOSC at the meeting in June 2008.

LINK launched

East Sussex Local Involvement Network (LINK) is up and running and East Sussex Disability Association has been appointed host organisation to provide support for it. Over the next few months an interim core group of volunteers will work with the host team to establish governance procedures,

help plan the work programme and communication programme.



A series of events are taking place over the next few months to help raise awareness of the LINK. The target is for the LINK to be fully operational by the end of the summer.

LINKs replace Patient and Public Involvement Forums and will have a much wider membership representing voluntary and community groups and interested individuals. Each PPI Forum has left a 'legacy' of ongoing topics and the LINK will blend these into its work programme. Many PPI Forum members have moved across to the LINK and this will help ensure the continuity of the thread of patient and public involvement established by the forums. The LINK has the remit to look at social care as well as health issues. Cllr Tidy commented, 'I am delighted to see the LINK in place. HOSC looks forward to a successful partnership and seeking opportunities to improve services for the people of East Sussex.'

For further information on LINK go to:

www.essp.org.uk

(Accessing LINK information via the East Sussex Strategic Partnership is an interim arrangement until the LINK establishes its own website.)

No comment

HOSC appreciates that the Healthcare Commission encourages third parties including HOSCs to comment on Annual Healthcheck Declarations.

HOSC's work in 2007/8 has been dominated, almost exclusively, by scrutiny of the East Sussex PCTs' Fit for the Future proposals. This means the committee has gathered very little evidence on which to base any comments on performance of NHS organisations against standards.

HOSC has agreed that it will make no comments for incorporation in Annual Healthcheck Declarations this year. This lack of comment does not imply any criticism or endorsement of a trust's performance against the core standards.

Moving on



Professor Peter Cox stood down from HOSC in March 2008 as the Patient and Public Forums' representative. This followed the disbandment of Forums which are

being succeeded by the Local Involvement Network (LINK). Cllr Tidy said, 'I would like to thank Peter for his contributions to HOSC. The Committee established a fruitful partnership with the Forums and having Peter on board helped strengthen this relationship.'

Next HOSC meeting

The next HOSC meeting is **10am Monday 16th June 2008** at County Hall, Lewes.

Webcast recordings and further details of meetings are available on the HOSC website: www.eastsussexhealth.org

Recordings of HOSC meetings can be seen on the internet. Go to the HOSC website: www.eastsussexhealth.org

HOSC 2007/2008

East Sussex County Council:

Cllr Sylvia Tidy Chairman
Cllr David Rogers OBE Vice Chairman
Cllr Beryl Healy
Cllr Philip Howson
Cllr Ruth O'Keeffe
Cllr Barry Taylor
Cllr John Wilson

Eastbourne Borough Council

Cllr Alex Hough

Hastings Borough Council

Cllr Eve Martin

Lewes District Council

Cllr Carolyn Lambert

Rother District Council

Cllr Angharad Davies

Wealden District Council

Cllr Diane Phillips

Voluntary services' representatives:

Mr Ralph Chapman

Chairman, Age Concern East Sussex

Ms Debby Matthews

Director, Southdowns CVS

East Sussex Local Involvement Network (LINK) representative:

To be nominated

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East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (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