



Health Scrutiny in East Sussex

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) Newsletter December 2010



www.eastsussexhealth.org



Season's Greetings

"Best wishes to you from all the HOSC Members and officers. We hope you have a happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year."

Cllr Sylvia Tidy, Chairman, Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Mind the gap - the health inequalities challenge

Variations in life expectancy and the health of people living in different parts of the county were the main topic of debate at November's HOSC meeting.

Dr Diana Grice, Director of Public Health for East Sussex, outlined the key findings from her latest Annual Report which focuses on health inequalities. The report notes that a wide range of factors influence people's health, from fixed genetic factors to environmental or social factors such as housing or employment, to lifestyle factors such as diet, exercise and smoking. Lower life expectancy and poorer health tend to be found in areas of the county which suffer from higher levels of deprivation.

The report identifies that circulatory diseases, cancer and respiratory disease are the top three causes of the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived at an East Sussex level.

If the mortality rate for these sorts of health conditions was the same in the most deprived areas as it is in the least deprived, significant gains could be made in life expectancy and years of healthy life.

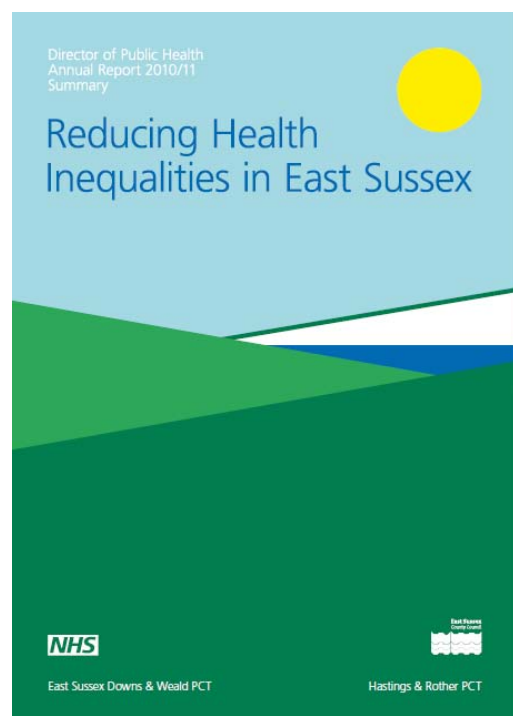
The HOSC debate focused on how the issues are being addressed by the NHS and their partners.

Cancer pilot project

Dr Grice assured the Committee of the focus being given to reducing cancer mortality rates. National funding has been obtained for a pilot project to work with the public and professionals to raise awareness of cancer symptoms and encourage people to go to the doctor early for a prompt diagnosis to be made. Where people are leaving it late to see their GP, Dr Grice said there are two main issues to be addressed: raising awareness of the risk factors and symptoms, and increasing people's willingness to access health services.

Dr Grice also highlighted that, although access to health services is important, to improve health it is also necessary to focus on the wider factors which lead to ill health in the first place. Preventative care is also important, such encouraging uptake of screening programmes and proactive care for people with long term conditions or known risk factors to prevent them deteriorating.

(....continued on page 2)





Targeted work

Dr Grice described targeted initiatives to improve health, focusing on the 20 wards in the county with the lowest life expectancy. In response to HOSC's questioning on the impact of this work, she acknowledged that, given the complex factors which impact on health it is difficult to isolate the impact of specific work, but the approaches being taken are based on national evidence of what works. There has been a general improvement in life expectancy which has been seen in other wards, as well as the 20 targeted.



Disease registers

Dr Grice's data showed that, for people with a relevant health condition or known risk, being on one of the disease registers kept by local GP practices is 'good for your health'. Identifying patients who have, or are at risk of particular conditions, helps enable the GP to ensure the condition is managed and measures taken to prevent worsening health where possible. HOSC asked how the use of these registers is being developed. Dr Grice explained that there are incentives in place to encourage GP practices to develop registers and extra support for practices in the 20 targeted areas.

Future work

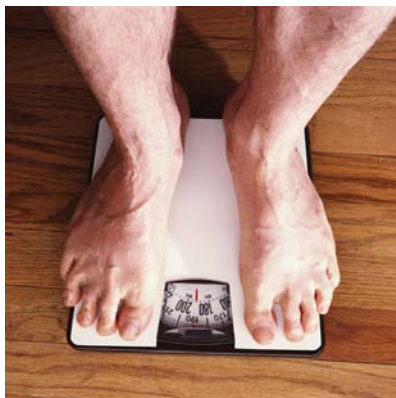
The Government plans to transfer lead responsibility for public health from the NHS to local authorities over the next couple of years. Dr Grice said that this will bring new opportunities to find ways to address the challenges in East Sussex and that the various organisations involved with public health work would be discussing the potential new arrangements early in 2011. Dr Grice also plans to develop an inequalities reduction plan to guide future work on narrowing the gaps in people's health, drawing on a recent national report into the issue.

Cllr Sylvia Tidy, HOSC Chairman said, "I am very pleased HOSC had a lengthy debate on these issues which are of such importance to East Sussex. There is some good work underway to improve health, but this will need to continue and develop through ongoing partnerships between local government, the NHS and local communities."

HOSC will receive a report on the implications of the recently published government White Paper on Public Health at the HOSC meeting on 10th March 2011.

For more information on health inequalities, view the summary or full report on the NHS website www.esdw.nhs.uk or contact Claire Lee on 01273 481327 for a summary report.

Action on nutrition review



East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust (ESHT) and Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust (BSUH) have given their initial responses to the recommendations arising from HOSC's review of nutrition, hydration and feeding in hospitals.

Both Trusts have welcomed the HOSC report and have put together action plans to take forward the recommendations. Shotham Kamath, Deputy Chief Nurse at ESHT described how several areas would be addressed as part of the productive ward programme, an initiative designed to maximise the time ward staff spend with patients through redesigning ward practices and systems. For example, the routine followed on each ward to prepare patients and staff for mealtimes is being reviewed and a new process will be tested on two wards before being rolled out.

HOSC asked a number of questions to clarify the proposed action in response to the Committee's review and asked that timescales be added to the Trust's action plan to make it easier to follow progress. (...continued on page 3)



Joy Churcher, Head of Dietetics at BSUH, explained how the Trust held a nutrition awareness month as part of a planned programme of activity on 'high impact nursing actions'. This had been an opportunity to start addressing some of the recommendations. Work on other areas such as assisted eating is being developed.

In response to questions on use of the Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST), used to identify patients at risk of or suffering from malnutrition, Ms Churcher highlighted that, although this tool is used across the Trust, nursing and care homes may use different systems. This means that care must be taken in sharing information about assessments of malnutrition due to the potential for confusion between different systems. The Trust has worked with some local homes to encourage use of MUST which is the nationally recognised tool, and HOSC was pleased to lend its support to this work, in the interests of consistency.

The Committee will receive updates on progress with implementation of the Trust action plans, starting with a report in June 2011. The original HOSC report is available on the website www.eastsussexhealth.org or contact Claire Lee on 01273 481327 for a copy.

New direction for community services

Plans for the future management of community health services such as health visiting, district nurses and community hospitals were discussed by HOSC. These services have historically been managed directly by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) but in recent years there has been a national push to transfer their management to other organisations and for PCTs to focus on their role of planning and buying the healthcare for the local area.

Simon Turpitt, Chairman of Sussex Community NHS Trust and Lisa Compton, Director of Assurance and Engagement for NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald/Hastings and Rother (the local Primary Care Trusts), outlined plans for Sussex Community NHS Trust to take on the management of these services for East Sussex. The Trust already manages similar services in West Sussex and Brighton and Hove.



Ms Compton explained that, although the transfer of management does not affect the services experienced by patients, over time there are plans to transform the services in line with a strategy that was recently consulted on and agreed. This will see services which:

- Focus on prevention of ill health, particularly for older residents
- Become more personalised and responsive to patients' needs
- Provide more care locally, reducing the need for people to go into hospital

HOSC sought assurance that the services would work closely with the County Council's social care services. Ms Compton agreed, and gave the example of an integrated intermediate care team approach which had been developed by the NHS and social care and would be introduced across the county if it was tested successfully.

Change of plan

Following the HOSC meeting it was announced that the Sussex Community Trust would not be taking over the services after all. In an update to HOSC Ms Compton said "Following detailed discussions... it has been agreed that Sussex Community Trust will concentrate on meeting the challenges for successful achievement of Foundation Trust status... rather than taking on services across the East Sussex area." Instead, it has been agreed that East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust will take on the management of the services, with the details to be agreed over the next few months.

Councillor Sylvia Tidy, HOSC Chairman, said "HOSC will of course focus on what this means for patients. The Committee will be following progress and it will be our role to consider proposed service developments or changes as they come forward."



HOSC to assess mental health progress

The HOSC Mental Health Task Group will be reconvening in the new year. Earlier in 2010 the Group examined proposals from the PCTs and Sussex Partnership Trust to develop community based mental health services and reduce the number of inpatient beds as more people are supported without needing to go into hospital. The Task Group's main conclusion, agreed by HOSC, was that the overall direction of travel was the right one, but that improvements were needed to community services before beds could be reduced.

With that in mind, the group is reconvening in early February to assess progress in detail, before HOSC receives a report in March. Cllr David Rogers, who chairs the Task Group, said "We would be pleased to hear any views on how mental health services are developing in relation to the original plans. Any feedback will inform our judgements, alongside looking at a range of data and talking to those running the services." Contact Claire Lee on 01273 481327 or Claire.lee@eastsussex.gov.uk if you have comments to make.

Next HOSC meeting

10am Thursday 10th March 2011 at County Hall, Lewes

Webcast recordings and further details available on the website: www.eastsussexhealth.org

HOSC December 2010

East Sussex County Council:

Cllr Sylvia Tidy – Chairman
Cllr David Rogers OBE – Vice Chairman
Cllr Carolyn Heaps
Cllr Philip Howson
Cllr Ruth O’Keeffe
Cllr Peter Pragnell
Cllr Barry Taylor

District and Borough Council representatives:

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 sector representatives:

Mr Maurice Langham – East Sussex Seniors Association
Ms Janet Colvert – Local Involvement Network
1 vacancy

Contact:

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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

