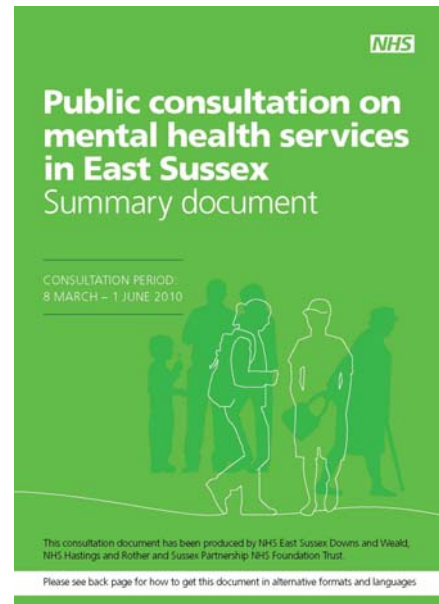




HOSC supports mental health proposals

HOSC has given qualified support to plans to provide more mental health care in the community and reduce the number of admissions to mental health hospitals. The plans would result in a reduction in the number of inpatient beds in East Sussex over the next 12-18 months as more service users stay at home, supported by community services. The Committee will closely scrutinise progress to ensure that commitments to improve support in the community are met, and beds remain available for service users who need to go into hospital.

A HOSC Task Group has spent the past few months investigating the proposals, put forward by NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald/NHS Hastings and Rother, and supported by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. The Task Group spoke to service user and carer representatives, professionals managing and delivering the service and sought the views of local GPs.



HOSC's research indicated that the proposals are in line with national guidance that hospital stays should be minimised and people supported at home where possible. Research also showed that East Sussex has higher admission rates and longer lengths of stay in hospital than some other areas, and that these could be reduced if better community support was available. Round the clock access to help in a crisis is particularly important to improve.

Councillor David Rogers, who chaired the Task Group, said, "Although we have concluded that the proposals are the right way forward, we recognise that service users and carers need to have more confidence that community services will be able to offer the support needed. Our recommendations focus on strong and open monitoring so that everyone can see whether NHS commitments to improvements are met and beds can be safely reduced. HOSC will take an active role in this, and will seek the views of service users and carers".

HOSC's report will be finalised in early July and submitted to NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald/NHS Hastings and Rother who will make the final decision. The report can be downloaded from www.eastsussexhealth.org or call Claire Lee on 01273 481327 for a copy.

Brighton development moving forward

A planned major redevelopment of the Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton is moving forward, with a planning application expected by Christmas 2010. The development involves demolishing the oldest buildings on the hospital site and building new wards, facilities for diagnostic tests and scans and a new cancer centre for Sussex. Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust, told HOSC that wards in the current buildings, some of which pre-date Florence Nightingale, do not meet modern standards of privacy and dignity for patients.

The development is part of the Trust's 3Ts programme – developing the hospital as the Sussex centre for Teaching, Trauma and Tertiary (very specialist) care. A key part of the plan is bringing neurosciences (currently in Haywards Heath) to the site. (Continued pg2)

Having these services on the same site as other specialties means that, for the first time, the Trust will be able to treat patients with the most serious multiple injuries. Currently, patients with injuries to both their head/brain and body often have to be airlifted to London.

Duane Passman, Director for 3Ts, assured HOSC that patient safety features had been built into the design, for example including a mix of single and four bedded rooms (which allow easier observation of more seriously ill patients). He responded to HOSC's challenge on how safe and hygienic care would be maintained on site during building works by assuring the Committee that tried and tested techniques would be used by the



The planned development (Source: BSUH presentation to HOSC)

building company and that this would be the Trust's priority. Some outpatient services will be moved to Brighton General Hospital during construction and other services housed in temporary accommodation on site. Many of the first buildings to be demolished house offices which can be more easily moved elsewhere.

Given the challenging financial climate nationally, HOSC queried the availability of funding for the development. Mr Selbie acknowledged the current uncertainty, but said that the Trust had received £18m of Department of Health funding to get the scheme to this stage, which the Trust saw as a vote of confidence in their plans.

Station health centres on track

HOSC has welcomed the opening of two new health centres at Eastbourne and Hastings railway stations which offer an 8am-8pm, 365 days a year service for both registered patients and anyone who needs to 'walk in' to see a GP or nurse. The Hastings service, within the Station Plaza health centre, has only just opened, but the Eastbourne centre has been operational for over 6 months, giving HOSC an opportunity to assess its impact.



It was hoped the centres would reach people who may not be registered with a local GP, such as students and visitors as well as offering a convenient additional option for other local people.

Murray King, Head of Primary Care for NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald/Hastings and Rother reported to HOSC that the Eastbourne centre had seen more 'walk-in' attendances than expected and appeared to be reaching busy commuters. Around a quarter of the people who had registered with the centre were men in their 20s and 30s – a group under represented in GP practice lists nationally. Gilly Wilford, a Director at South East Health, the organisation running the centres, said that around 15% of people attending the centre were from groups which tended to be harder for health services to reach, such as homeless people and the gypsy and traveller communities.

Councillor Sylvia Tidy, HOSC Chairman said, "it is good to see these centres reaching people who may have poorer health or find it more difficult to access health services."

HOSC highlighted a potential role for the centres in offering an alternative service when local GP practices have occasional closures for important staff training. The Committee believes it is essential for the service to be consistently open during its advertised hours and particularly when local practices are closed.

HERMES helps urgent referrals

HOSC has assessed the impact of the HERMES system which aims to help health professionals refer patients needing urgent care to appropriate services. HERMES (short for Health Referral Management System) has, for the past 8 months, been offering a single telephone point of contact for professionals such as GPs and paramedic practitioners considering referring patients to a hospital Medical Assessment Unit (MAU). Qualified nurses can give advice on whether alternative services are available to meet the patients needs, thus avoiding a hospital visit, or can liaise with the MAU to organise admission.

Nicky Murrell, Assistant Director of Strategy and Gillian Hamer, Service Improvement Lead, NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald/Hastings and Rother told HOSC that usage of the system had exceeded expectations and that some initial teething problems with call handling had been addressed. Consideration is now being given to extending the service to a wider range of community health staff who may need to make referrals.

Developing alternatives to hospital

One of the most valuable aspects of the system is the ability to record difficulties in accessing appropriate care and instances where an admission to hospital could have been avoided if alternative services had been available. HOSC asked how the NHS would be addressing the gaps identified. Some of the required services already exist but access needs to be improved, whilst others require the development of a completely new service. One priority is a Rapid Access Clinic for Older People. This is currently being investigated to see whether there is sufficient evidence to support introducing such a service.

Possible Primary Care Trust merger

The Boards of NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald and NHS Hastings and Rother, the two Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) for East Sussex, are considering a merger. The role of PCTs is to analyse the health needs of their population and to plan and buy (or 'commission') services to meet these needs with the resources available.

The aim of the merger would be to create a single, strong commissioning organisation for the county which shares a boundary with other county-wide bodies, including social care.

Sam Chittenden, Director of Strategy, told HOSC that the PCTs would still work closely with local areas, particularly through groups (or 'clusters') of local GP practices. She also said that a merger would save £600k per year in reduced administrative and Board costs.

Lisa Compton, Director of Assurance of Engagement assured HOSC that consultation would be undertaken with key local organisations, including those recommended by HOSC, plus staff and GPs, before the Boards made a decision. If agreed, the most likely date for a merger would be April 2011. HOSC will respond to the consultation in due course.

HOSC visits 'make ready' ambulance depot

HOSC Members Cllr Sylvia Tidy and Cllr Carolyn Heaps visited the South East Coast Ambulance Service 'make ready' depot in Hastings recently. The councillors wanted to see how the 'make ready' system, which involves a centralised approach to cleaning, maintaining and restocking ambulances can make a difference to patients.

Nycki Stephens, Depot Manager explained that a specialist team checks each vehicle regularly, minimising the chances of vehicle or equipment failure. The team is also able to take enhanced infection control measures.



The approach is designed to get specialist ambulance crew back out on the road more quickly and improve safety and reliability. Geoff Catling, Director of Logistics, outlined the Trust's plans to roll out the model more widely and HOSC will follow developments.

News in brief

HOSC chooses to end 'choose and book' monitoring

HOSC has ended its monitoring of an electronic system to support GPs and patients in choosing a hospital and booking an appointment. The usage of the system has been disappointing but HOSC has concluded that further scrutiny is unlikely to have an impact.

New HOSC Member

Maurice Langham of East Sussex Seniors Association has joined HOSC as the second representative from the voluntary and community sector.

HOSC looks at the big picture

In September HOSC will be holding a seminar with local NHS leaders to look at the big challenges for the NHS over the next few years. What should HOSC be asking about NHS priorities? If you have views email healthscrutiny@eastsussex.gov.uk or call 01273 481327.

Next HOSC meeting

10am Thursday 16th September 2010 at County Hall, Lewes

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

HOSC

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

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 Dave Rogers,
Vice-Chair, Hastings and Rother Health
and Social Care Forum

Mr Maurice Langham

East Sussex Seniors Association

East Sussex Local Involvement Network
(LINK) representative:

Ms Janet Colvert

Chair East Sussex LINK

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

