

DELIVERING EQUITABLE ACCESS IN PRIMARY MEDICAL CARE

INFORMATION UPDATE FOR THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON THE PLYMOUTH GP HEALTH CENTRE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This briefing provides an update for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Equitable Access in Primary Medical Care Programme in Plymouth, specifically the Plymouth GP Health Centre service which opened 1st April 2009. The Committee has previously received information during the development and implementation phases of this service. The aim of the briefing is to inform members of how the service has developed during its first 12 months and how it aligns with the wider context of offering increased access and choice to patients from primary medical care services across the city.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The NHS Next Stage Review Interim Report (October 2007) carried out by Lord Darzi, reported that, despite sustained investment and improvement in the NHS over the past ten years, access to primary medical care services and the quality of those services, continues to vary significantly across the country. Many of the poorest communities nationally experience the worst health outcomes and major inequalities exist within England in life expectancy, infant mortality and cancer mortality. Further, the gap in life expectancy between the most deprived and least deprived areas has widened, despite improvements in life expectancy in the most deprived areas.
- 2.2 The focus of the Equitable Access in Primary Medical Care programme was on achieving an accessible, fair and personalised NHS (whilst upholding the values of safe and effective primary care services). All Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) were required to undertake a national procurement process to set up a GP led health centre service in each area to support this initiative. The procurement was open to all suitable qualified and experienced healthcare providers. The Plymouth contract was awarded in December 2008 to a social enterprise organisation, Devon Health Limited.
- 2.3 PCTs in areas of greatest need were also required to set up new GP Practices. Plymouth is not an under-doctored area and did not meet the criteria for this initiative. The national MORI patient survey reports consistently good results for Plymouth's primary medical services, with positive feedback on the 42 practices providing in-hours services and the out-of-hours urgent care service. Over 70% of local GP Practices provide extended hours access to their patients, during an evening and/or on a Saturday morning. There are approximately 272,000 patients registered with the GP practices at present and the average practice list size is 6,500 patients.

3. PLYMOUTH GP HEALTH CENTRE 2009-10

- 3.1 The GP Health Centre is located at the Mount Gould Primary Health Care Centre, adjacent to the Local Care Centre. It opened on 1st April 2009 and will register patients from any part of the city. The service works closely with the Mount Gould practice to ensure effective use of resources including premises.
- 3.2 In line with the Department of Health's service specification guidance, the following core services are offered to patients:
- Provision of core GP services from an accessible location
 - Open from 8.00am to 8.00pm, 7 days a week, all year round
 - Provision of GP-led services to both registered and non-registered patients (ie "non-registered patients" are those people who are already registered with other GP Practices or who may not have a GP)
 - Bookable appointments and a walk-in service
 - Integrated services, including community based services
- 3.3 NHS Plymouth also developed the service specification to reflect local needs, particularly "harder to reach groups" who may not find it easy to access traditional primary medical services. The following services are now offered:
- Outreach health clinics have been established for people who are homeless, in liaison with local voluntary organisations and statutory services
 - Outreach clinics for offenders, in liaison with the Probation Office and offenders' own registered GP practices
 - Opportunities for closer liaison with the organisations and staff providing services for young people, such as the Zone.
 - More convenient access and choice for people who commute, either coming in to Plymouth from other areas or those people who do not work locally, tourists, and working parents with children
 - Liaison with the Accident and Emergency Department to signpost patients who attend that department but do not have a local registered GP practice
 - Services aimed at prevention and improving health such as smoking cessation, alcohol screening and contraception can also be offered to non-registered patients

- 3.4 During its first year the service has grown from having no registered patients to 786 registered patients as at 31st March 2010. There has been steady growth and the service has the capacity to register more new patients. A key quality standard of the service is to ensure continuity of care to patients, particularly those people with long term health conditions, and non-registered patients who attend more than twice are asked if they wish to register with the service. Feedback from both local and national patient surveys has been positive. Homeless people without a local GP are also encouraged to register with the service.
- 3.5 Attendances by non-registered patients have increased over the year with an average of 14 patients per day being seen in April, rising to 25 patients per day in March. Main reasons for patients choosing to use the service include more convenient choice about access times and ability to be seen on the day, especially during the evening and at weekends. Demand can fluctuate, which can present the service with additional pressure to ensure all patients are seen during opening hours. Non-registered patients are encouraged to book appointments by telephone whenever possible to enable the service to allocate its resources appropriately. Feedback from patients' surveys has been very positive, with one complaint being received during the year.
- 3.6 The Outreach Clinics have been attended by over 60 people, with a number being able to attend on a regular basis to receive on-going care and support for physical, mental health and substance misuse problems. A review of the first year of these new services is being undertaken and commissioners will liaise with the Local Authority to ensure outcomes are identified and contribute to the overall strategies for these groups of people. Wherever possible homeless people are encouraged to register with the service to ensure continuity of care and facilitate referrals to other services.
- 3.7 During 2009/10 the service provider and primary care commissioners have liaised with groups such as the Primary Care Clinical Governance Forum, Local Medical Committee, Medicines Management Team, and the PCT's Provider Arm Human Resources Department and IM and T support to ensure safe and clear operational practices and constructive and co-ordinated working relationships. There is also close liaison with the PCT's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and, more recently, closer communication with the LINKs network.
- 3.8 Performance management of the five year Alternative Provider of Medical Services (APMS) contract is structured through monthly meetings and formal joint quarterly reviews. The Commissioning Team includes primary care, finance and information managers. Devon Health Limited has ensured focused implementation and operational support from experienced practice managers, nominated clinical leads, and dedicated implementation manager time.
- 3.9 There have been a number of updates sent to other primary care service providers, including GP practices, community pharmacies, optometrists, dentists, community services and NHS direct to advise them of the GP Health Centre's services and to try and ensure timely and effective co-ordination and signposting of patients to the appropriate services. NHS Plymouth wanted to ensure that the role of this new service is understood as well as possible by both patients and other service providers. For instance the GP Health Centre does not provide a minor injury service – this would be through the Minor Injuries Unit at the Cumberland Hospital or the Accident and Emergency Department.

- 3.10 The GP Health Centre has developed its website to provide more information about its services and access times. Further information about the service can be found on www.plymouthgphealthcentre.nhs.uk

4. WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2010/11

- 4.1 Key areas of work for 2010/11 will be:
- Increasing the numbers of registered patients in order to provide an essential basis for core activity and financial stability.
 - Reviewing capacity and skill-mix to use resources to meet demand from walk-in patients. This includes planned recruitment of a nurse practitioner and additional receptionist time.
 - Consolidating the outreach clinic work, including on-going provision of computerised information systems in liaison with the IM and T department and the Local Authority
 - On-going development of services aimed at prevention and improved health
 - Continuing to clarify the role of the service and how it fits in with other local primary and community services and plans
 - Accreditation as a medical training practice during 2011
 - Completing the preparation for registering with the Care Quality Commission from April 2012

5. SUMMARY

- Members are invited to comment on the progress that has been made during on the development of primary medical services to improve choice and access for patients in Plymouth.
- Members are also invited to comment on the planned priority intentions for 2010/11

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