

Briefing

Service Development/Change

GP Health Centre

For Information and Comment

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1 Purpose of the briefing

To update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the recent developments around the 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week, GP Health Centre service based at Mount Gould hospital site.

2 Decisions/Actions requested

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- Note the situation
- Note and support the proposed actions
- Note the engagement to date and the future engagement with the public

3 Background

In 2009 all PCTs were required to develop GP Health Centres that provided an 8 to 8, seven day a week GP service. It is important to note that at that time, patient feedback data indicated that people in Plymouth had high levels of satisfaction with the existing GP services and no particular gaps in service were identified. Nevertheless, as a government requirement, the service was commissioned. Devon Health was contracted to provide the service and it opened in April 2009 and was delivered from Mount Gould Primary Care Centre. The original intention was that these centres would provide patients with greater choice and longer opening hours.

The service has been running for just over a year now. During that time four distinct groups of people have used this service and these are:

- Patients who registered with the GP Health Centre
- Patients who use the outreach service (homeless and ex-offenders)
- Un-registered patients (patients registered with another GP) this includes commuters who choose to use the service because it is near where they work, holiday makers, visitors
- Non-registered patients (not registered with anyone) this includes those people who are new to the city or who have never previously registered.

Even before the service was commissioned, people in Plymouth reported a consistently high level of satisfaction with existing services. The results of the national patient survey in 2009/10 reflect local patients' overall recognition of high quality clinical services, responsive staff and good access to their GP or practice nurse during the main opening hours between 8.00am and 6.30pm, Monday to Friday. The patient survey also shows that patients who require urgent primary medical advice and treatment outside of their practice's hours feel they get a good service from the city's out of hours service, provided by Devon Doctors, which operates between 6.30pm and 8.00am Monday to Friday and all day on weekends and Bank Holidays. The out of hours service provides patients with either telephone advice, a consultation with a GP or nurse practitioner at a treatment centre or, if needed, a home visit.

4 Current position

The current position is that the provider of this service (Devon Health) has given NHS Plymouth notice of termination of contract. They will continue to operate for both registered and non-registered patients until 28 February 2011 but will not be registering any new patients between now and then. They have given notice because the numbers of patients registering has not been as high as expected and this means they are not able to meet the contractual target on registration of patients. This is not a reflection of the service or on the provider of the service who has invested considerable effort into developing and delivering good quality services. Rather, NHS Plymouth believes that this reflects the good quality level of access and care available from the 42 GP practices in the city and the fact that patients preferred to remain with their own GP. It should also be noted that Plymouth has a good selection of other services providing urgent care. It has 42 GP practices all of whom have open books (are able to take new patients). In addition, Plymouth has:

- Advice on over the counter treatments for minor illness from a number of community pharmacies who open in the evening and at weekends
- Health information and advice from NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or www.nhs.uk (24 hour availability)
- Minor Injuries Unit walk-in service at the Cumberland Centre (open from 8.30am to 9pm every day of the year)
- Emergency care at all times via the Emergency Department at Derriford Hospital and the emergency ambulance service

5 Options

At the moment, there are a number of options available to the commissioner, these are:

a) *Continue with the current provider*

The current provider has withdrawn from the contract with NHS Plymouth and the Commissioner is therefore not in a position to insist on their continuing to provide the service.

b) *Do nothing*

NHS Plymouth recognises that the GP Health Centre offered those people using it greater choice and more convenience. Doing nothing would reduce the convenience experienced by the non- and un-registered users. Those people registered with the service would need to find another GP and register with them. More particularly, the outreach service provided by the GP health Centre has ensured that one of the more vulnerable groups of people is provided with a service that they have traditionally found very difficult to access.

c) *Re-commission a like for like service*

The strength of this kind of service is said to lie with the range of choice and the added convenience that it gives to patients. However, making this choice would mean retaining a service model that focuses all of the greater convenience and choice in one location and therefore disadvantages those people for whom the location is not convenient or easy to access. This model costs a large amount of tax payers' money and the need for this service and indeed its ability to deliver the benefits of convenience and choice is not proven. Commissioning a like for like service would however, ensure that none of the services current users was affected.

d) Enhance the remaining GP and urgent care services to provide the choice and convenience that users tell us they want

This option would involve reviewing, with the public, the other urgent care services in the city to ensure that they meet the needs of service users in respect of convenience and choice. This work is already underway as part of NHS Plymouth's Quality care, Best Value (QIPP) programme of work. The benefits of this option are that:

- It provides an opportunity to properly engage with the public on their needs in respect of convenience and choice (the initial government directive on GP health Centres did not allow sufficient time for such engagement).
- It would allow for the development of a model of urgent care services that delivers the range of choice and convenience in locations around the city therefore making it less likely that any group of people is disadvantaged.
- It potentially makes a better use of tax payer's money.

6 Engagement to date

NHS Plymouth has already begun the process of engagement with the public and to date has focused on ensuring that people are aware of the situation regarding the GP Health Centre. The table below summarises what has been done or planned so far.

| Public Group | Action to date |
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| OSC Panel | Informal discussion with the Chair and the provision of a briefing document setting out the situation and options |
| LINKs | Informal discussion with the Chair and the provision of a briefing document setting out the situation and options |
| General public, Un-registered patients and non registered patients | A media statement has been prepared and will be released following discussions with the OSC and LINKs. |
| Outreach patients | As an interim measure the GP practice at Mount Gould will take on the provision of the outreach service so there will be no break in service and the more vulnerable patients will not see a change in the service they experience. |
| All (primary care services review) | As part of its continuing service improvement work, NHS Plymouth has been working with the public throughout 2010 to review primary medical services. This has so far included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings with members of the Local Involvement Network (LINKs) |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examining and raising, through the GP annual reports access, the issue of better communication of opening times and improved customer service • Public meeting (GP question time organised by LINK and NHS Plymouth) • Race Equality Council feedback given following a mystery shopper activity incorporated in the review • Disability access service – all services are currently engaged in this assessment process • Results of the national GP patient survey • PCT public focus days specifically around the review and strengthening of urgent care services • Public engagement event around ‘Quality Care, Best Value’ generated feedback that has been incorporated into the review |
| All (Urgent care review) | <p>NHS Plymouth has had preliminary discussions with representatives from patient and community groups.</p> <p>There has also been discussion with clinicians</p> |

7 Future plans

NHS Plymouth commissioners plan to draw up a full engagement plan that includes:

- Working with clinicians to determine a preferred option In the case of the clinicians to seek approval for a preferred option through the Professional Executive Committee (PEC) – GP commissioners. Public engagement
- Working with the public to determine the nature and extent of their need for convenience and choice in relation to urgent care provision.
- Robust use of existing patient experience feedback to inform the decision making process

Our future plans also include a review of the clinical evidence base and the benefits and costs of the GP Health centre the findings of which will be used to inform the decision making process.