

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 APRIL 2017

ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE

Summary

1. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) is to be briefed on access to Primary Care following ongoing concerns from residents about being unable to secure a GP appointment in a timely manner.
2. Members will be aware of the changing landscape of primary care nationally and the NHS England General Practice Forward View, published in April 2016. All CCGs were required to publish a Local General Practice Forward View Delivery Plan by 24 February 2017.
3. More locally, the emerging Herefordshire and Worcestershire Sustainability and Transformation Plan will result in further changes to the local health economy.
4. Representatives from the 3 Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have been invited to attend, alongside a Governing Body GP.

Background

5. Within Worcestershire, there are 65 GP Surgeries and with the exception of two practices all have been rated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as good or outstanding. Patient satisfaction data is generally good and results compare well against national statistics despite a gradual and consistent reduction elsewhere in the country.
6. This data is captured via the annual National Patient Survey. In addition, Healthwatch Worcestershire undertook some research which resulted in the 'Going to the Doctors' report being published in September 2016.
7. Most of the contact that people have with the NHS is with general practice and this the first step for most patients in diagnosing and treating health conditions. General practice, therefore plays a vital role in healthcare. Good access to general practice matters for patients and for the health system as this can reduce pressure on other parts of the NHS.
8. Improving access to general practice is a priority for the government who have committed to recruiting 5,000 extra doctors and to ensuring that people have access to general practice out of hours 7 days a week by 2020. Whilst the increase in GP numbers is the government aspiration, most commentators consider that this target will not be met given the number of doctors who are seeking retirement and the numbers actually being recruited into the discipline. This is a significant risk nationally and locally.

9. Worcestershire like other parts of the UK is not immune from the pressures on general practice. These are:

- a) Both locally and nationally there is increasing demand for access to general practice. The Department of Health and NHS England have not routinely collected data on activity levels in general practice since 2008. A survey undertaken of GP workload in 2016 identified a 16% increase in the number of consultations between 2009 and 2014 at the same time as a continuous reduction in the GP workforce and funding. It is worth noting that in terms of the numbers of patients seen, many moderate sized surgeries will have the same number of patient contacts per day as both local emergency departments combined.
- b) The increase in population and especially in those groups most likely to seek help from their GP which are those patients aged less than 4 years and those aged over 75 years. This is a particular risk locally given the demographic profile of Worcestershire.
- c) Increasing complexity of patients with many patients being wholly treated in the community, whereas they would have been seen in hospital in the past.
- d) Significant shortages in both practice nurse and GPs both nationally and locally. This is having an impact upon the NHS' ability to deliver services

10. Solutions that the CCG have encouraged include:

- a) Working with Health Education England (which has the responsibility to train young doctors) and the Royal College of GPs to encourage young doctors to consider Worcestershire as a place to train as a GP and then to stay.
- b) South Worcestershire has been a Prime Minister's GP Access Pilot site since 2015 which has allowed the trialling of different modes of access to general practice and other health professionals during extended opening hours. All South Worcestershire residents will have access to extended hours during 2017\18.
- c) Six practices in Redditch will be offering increased same day access via a Redditch Access Hub during 2017\18. This is described in Section 3 of the Worcestershire General Practice Forward View Local Delivery Plan.
- d) Increased access will begin to be available in Redditch & Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest in 2018 with 100% population coverage by the end of March 2019. Proposed service models are set out in Section 3 of the Worcestershire General Practice Forward View Local Delivery Plan.

12. GP practices' working arrangements affect the proportion of patients who can get appointments. The availability of appointments varies significantly between different practices and much of this variation cannot be explained by demographic factors, practice characteristics or supply of general practice staff alone. The National Audit Office in their Stocktake of Access to general practice in England, 2015, concluded that the way practices work is an important factor. Practices have different processes for allocating and booking appointments and as independent contractors are not required to do so.

13. All practices will be expected in the near future to install a tool within their clinical systems which will count the number and type of appointments available which will

be collated by NHS England. This tool (Apollo) is currently being piloted in South Worcestershire.

14. In addition, CCGs are expecting to be required by NHS England to monitor waiting times for appointments. Further information on this is awaited.

Purpose of the meeting

15. Members are invited to consider and comment on the information provided and determine:

- Whether any further information or scrutiny is required at this stage.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Healthwatch Worcestershire Survey Report ‘Going to the Doctors’ - available on the Healthwatch Worcestershire website at: <http://www.healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk/going-to-the-doctors/>
- Appendix 2 – Worcestershire General Practice Forward View Local Delivery Plan

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- General Practice Forward View April 2016
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/gpfv.pdf>