

Briefing Notes

Social and Community Overview and
Scrutiny Committee 10th June 2009

This note contains information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee but where no decisions from Members are needed.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the person indicated.

Update on the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee "HOSC"

At the Social and Community Committee meeting of 5th June 2008 I provided a report on the work of the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny committee from November 2007. This is an update on the work of the Committee since then.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's responsibilities are set out in law and covers areas relating to health services and health issues. It does this by reviewing constructively challenging and monitoring local health related services particularly those provided and commissioned by the NHS

The committee also plays an important role in reviewing any proposals for significant changes to NHS services, in order to ensure that adequate consultation has taken place and that the proposals lead to improvements to local services. It is the only county council committee which has the legal power to directly refer issues to government for reconsideration

The committee is formed from 7 county council members and 6 district members

Key areas of Activity

Performance, the committee has monitored the performance of NHS Gloucestershire against key nation targets including:-

Access

Waiting times for referral to inpatient and outpatient treatment

Direct access to audiology.

Cancer treatment targets

Choose and book utilisation

A&E

Ambulance response times

Smoking cessation

Healthcare infections

Support for carers the committee has reviewed the implementation of the carers' strategy during 2008 assisting in monitoring its delivery through ongoing scrutiny of the agency action plans

Transport to NHS services.

In May 2008 the committee reviewed the impact of its 2005 report into transport to NHS services. This brought together responses from NHS Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the county council's integrated transport unit. Significant progress has been made including in partnership working and bus routes to hospital sites

Access to NHS dentistry

The committee considered the current situation regarding access to NHS dentists including information on variations between districts and NHS Gloucestershire's future programme for improving access

Prison healthcare service

Following the reduction of beds in the assessment and treatment unit at Gloucester Prison the committee were concerned at the potential for adverse impact on prisoners with mental health needs. A group of committee councillors visited the prison, met with the governor and prison staff and found no evidence to that effect. But the committee became concerned about the different types of drug misuse treatment for prisoners from England and Wales and on behalf of the prison has raised this with the Secretary of State for Justice and the Secretary of State for Wales

Scrutiny task groups over the last year:-

Ambulance services in rural districts

3 district subgroups were established with HOSC district members as the core to review poor ambulance response times in their areas the joint recommendations were presented to HOSC in September 2008

Excess winter mortality

I was elected chair for this task group which over last winter examined the extent and causes of excess winter mortality in the county in comparison with national and European statistics. We then considered action being taken locally and made recommendations to aid reduction in numbers

The report was given to HOSC in March of this year, work on the recommendations will continue in 2009

Standards for better healthcare

As part of the health check process, Health overview and scrutiny committees throughout the country may make evidence based comments on the performance of their local NHS organisations against core standards

The report was given to HOSC in March this year.

Wingmoor Farm

This task group was commissioned in 2006 in response to concerns about possible negative impact on the health of local residents from the Wingmoor Farm waste treatment and landfill sites. A report from the task group was presented to HOSC in March of this year but the Community Health impact assessment facilitated by NHS Gloucestershire was not completed until March 2009 and the task group was unable to consider it before the report was given to HOSC.

This long running task group will continue its work over 2009

Planned for the coming year

Inpatient services for children and young people in Gloucestershire

NHS Gloucestershire has commissioned this independent review it will be presented to HOSC this summer

Specialist commissioning

A series of changes to around 20 different highly specialised services will begin in 2009 These services are provided on a regional basis

HOSC will be 1 of the 16 Health Scrutiny committees of the south west reviewing these services and joint committees will be required to do so.

Wingmoor Farm

The committee will regularly monitor the key actions identified in the report to ensure that the agencies concerned are carrying out those recommended in the health impact assessment

NHS dentistry

HOSC will continue to review issues and the developing access strategy. NHS Gloucestershire has commissioned a review of NHS dentistry which will be published in summer 2009.

Healthy Gloucestershire

HOSC will examine priority areas of the Health and Community Well-being Strategy and consider how it can be part of the process to deliver improvements.

If any Members of Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee have any issues relating to health services that they would like me to raise with HOSC, I would welcome any feedback.

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