

## **Update to LINK on the Work of the Cumbria Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee**

- 1 This update captures the main items considered at the last meeting of the Cumbria Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee held on 15 January 2010 and some of our plans for our next meeting to be held on 20 April 2010.
- 2.2 The Committee was asked to investigate concerns that women in the Barrow area were having to attend Royal Lancaster Infirmary (RLI) or even Bolton for breast screening assessment and treatment. The Committee was able to clarify that most patients receive full screening and assessment at Furness General Hospital (FGH) in Barrow but that around 16 patients a week are currently referred to RLI. Only a small number that require specialist assessment are referred to Bolton.
- 2.3 The University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Trust acknowledged that the service for patients in the Barrow area needs to be improved and that current arrangements need to be better explained to the local community via appropriate information through leaflets/articles in local community press etc including how to complain. They confirmed that steps are being taken to advertise and to appoint to the key medical vacancies of consultant surgeon and radiologist. These should help improve the services provided at FGH.
- 2.4 The Committee resolved to monitor the situation and requested that the Trust report back to the Committee at its next meeting on 20 April 2010 informing it of progress made re provision of better information on current cancer care services, appointment of key medical posts and future intentions for improving and providing an integrated service to people in the Barrow area locally. The meeting was followed by issue of a press release and the Chairman being interviewed on BBC Cumbria.

- 2.5 The Committee met with the Cumbria representatives of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to consider its response to changes in the way that the Committee is invited to comment on the work of health providers. Previously, under the Annual Health Check system, the Committee commented to the Healthcare Commission on the compliance of the Cumbria Health Trusts against 44 core health standards. Under the new arrangements, the Committee has been invited to make comments before 31 January 2010 using a template provided by CQC which seeks to illicit views primarily on the basis of patient experience. Instead of Trust-wide comments, Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) are invited to make comments at lower levels e.g. individual hospitals, where they are able.
- 2.6 A draft commentary was considered by the Committee and it was agreed that initial feedback should be provided by 31 January 2010. After this deadline, CQC would prefer that a running commentary is provided as issues arise and it was agreed that there will be a standing agenda item in future in respect of feeding back information on a regular basis to CQC in order to demonstrate that the Committee is fulfilling its responsibilities.
- 3.7 Each Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee meeting includes an update on the work programme including the work of the Task and Finish Groups. The key points to highlight from this are as follows:
- (1) A seminar on NHS Finance and Commissioning is being planned (now fixed for 12 March 2010) for Members and Substitutes on the Committee including the LINK representative. If this is successful, consideration will be given to extending this to other County and District Councillors on a locality basis.
  - (2) Membership of a new Task and Finish Group on obesity was sought and an initial meeting to explore current issues has been arranged for 10 March 2010 in order that a review can be better scoped. Jane Thompson will be the LINK representative on this group.
  - (3) Issues around pathology services at West Cumberland Hospital, previously discussed by the Committee on 14 October 2009, are now being picked up through the work of the Task and Finish Group looking at the (£100m) New Developments at this site.
  - (4) A Task and Finish Group continues to monitor Acute Medical Services in the Morecambe Bay area. Specific concerns expressed about ambulance turnaround times and patient treatment at such times have been conveyed to the North West Ambulance Service and will be picked up when they report to the full Committee on 20 April 2010
  - (5) The Committee heard that a meeting of the 'Closer to Home North' Task and Finish Group was planned for 5 February 2010. The Joint League of Friends are invited to join the Group in view of concerns shared with the

full Committee on 14 October 2010 about changes to bed numbers at Community Hospitals.

- (6) The Committee plans to make smoking and tobacco control a main item on the agenda for 20 April 2010. This is a follow-up to the Committee report 'The Last Gasp' which was highly commended by the national Centre for Public Scrutiny last year. It was agreed that any available information on education programmes about help to prevent young people taking up smoking should be made available for that meeting.
  - (7) The Committee also agreed to look at the implications of the Cumbria joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) for this work programme and that this be included in the next agenda on 20 April 2010 so that decisions could be taken on future work priorities.
- 2.8 An NHS update report provided included information on responses to the recent flooding including mental health/stress related support. In spite of the many difficulties, the floods, particularly in the Cockermouth area, have acted as a catalyst bringing health teams together under one roof and offering a more integrated response to local needs.
- 2.9 The report also included a detailed update on the Closer to Home strategy including a re-commitment to bed number reductions at community hospitals at previously agreed ranges. There is an emphasis on the LIFT programme which will now enable the commencement of hospital rebuild programmes and the development of local clinically-led decision-making. There was also an update on dental commissioning issues where it was reported that progress was being made but that problems still existed in some areas. It was agreed that a further report be submitted to the Committee in six months time if there appeared to be insufficient progress on resolving outstanding problems in commissioning dental services.
- 2.10 A report was submitted to Committee updating on the work of LINK on health related matters. LINK has produced a recent report on arrangements at Westmorland Hospital at Kendal including patient views on the Primary Care Assessment Unit and on signage and is now interviewing ambulance staff. Link also continues to monitor the situation over new dental practices in West Cumbria and has recently submitted a report.