

Health Select Committee

A meeting of Health Select Committee was held on Monday, 15th December, 2008.

Present: Cllr Mrs Ann Cains (Chairman), Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Julia Cherrett, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley.

Officers: Fiona Shayler, Judith Trainer (LD); Angela Connor, Jan Watson (CESC).

Also in attendance: Elaine Wyllie (PCT).

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Cllr Aidan Cockerill, Cllr Mrs Liz Nesbitt.

H **Declarations of Interest**

59/08

None

H **Draft Minutes - 10th November, 2008**

60/08

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

H **Review of Audiology**

61/08

Members were provided with a presentation from Elaine Wyllie regarding the commissioning of audiology services. The range of tests and services available was highlighted together with the pathways to access these services.

Information was provided on the service being currently piloted by Specsavers, Middlesbrough. Patients were referred to Specsavers for a hearing test if they were over 55 and fit and healthy. The current pathway for Specsavers took approximately 7 weeks, although it was stressed that this was for routine matters. The pathway through the hospital led service was currently taking 20-22 weeks but from December 2008 the pathway would be reduced to 18 weeks.

The Newborn Hearing Screening Programme began in 2006 with approximately 15,000 babies being screened each year at approximately 7 weeks old. Health checks were also carried out for children at 6 months, 12 months and 18 months.

Elaine provided detail on the areas that she felt were a challenge such as patients currently with an analogue hearing aid requesting a change to a digital hearing aid; people with hearing difficulties not accessing services for various reasons; some patients not using their hearing aid once they had received it.

Discussion was held on the aftercare service that was provided by the hospital and through the pilot scheme at Specsavers. Through the Specsavers scheme, the aftercare service was available for up to three years, after three years a further referral via the GP would be required. Patients were provided with a booklet of vouchers to enable them to receive new batteries and tubing from various providers. Analogue hearing aids were no longer produced but could still be repaired if parts were available.

Jan Watson and Angela Connor, Sensory Loss Team, were in attendance to provide evidence to Members. The team currently provided a service to 2491 hard of hearing clients; 149 deaf, 79 deaf without speech, 146 dual sensory loss, 9 deaf/blind, with regard to under 18 clients there were currently 25 deaf and 37 hard of hearing.

The service was advertised in various appropriate establishments in the borough. Members requested information on how referrals were made and whether schools were able to refer to the service. It was stated that schools did not currently refer to the service, however, the team would prefer to be involved as early as possible to assist clients.

The Sensory Loss Team were able to provide equipment such as loop systems, pagers linked to smoke alarm/baby monitors/door bell etc. The Service was currently tendering to enable a local provider to provide equipment and aftercare. The service currently had no waiting list.

CONCLUDED that the information received be noted.

H Work Programme

62/08

The next meeting would be held in January 2009 (date to be confirmed) with a site visit to the Audiology Department at James Cook Hospital followed by the main meeting.

Members discussed further evidence that they wished to receive and arrangements would be made for small groups of Members to visit local deaf/hard of hearing clubs.

A meeting to discuss the NHS Annual Health Check would need to be organised in Feb/March. Clarification on the deadline would be sought. It was possible that a further additional meeting would need to be arranged.

CONCLUDED that the Work Programme be noted.

H Chairman's Update

63/08

A formal response had been received from Momentum. The Chairman informed Members that a model of the new hospital was available to view at the Swallow Hotel on 13th January between 12pm and 8pm.

A further letter of protest had been sent to the Secretary of State regarding the North East Ambulance Call Centre relocation. An update would be provided to Members once a response had been received.

The Chairman had met with the Community Development Officer employed by the LINK. It was anticipated that a meeting would be arranged with the Committee and the LINK in due course.

It was reported that a Regional Health Event had taken place in order to discuss ideas for how regional health scrutiny could operate.

Further to the previous health training that had been provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, an offer of a further free half day training had been offered. The Chairman would investigate if a full day could be made available to Members.

CONCLUDED that the Chairman's update be noted.