

TEES VALLEY BREAST CARE SERVICES

Summary

The Committee will receive an update on the continuing developments in relation to Tees Valley Breast Care Services.

Detail

1. The last update in relation to the situation regarding Tees Valley Breast Services was provided to the Committee in December 2021. Slides from the presentation given to Members are included below for background context:

Background

- In October 2015, the Breast Diagnostic Service at James Cook University Hospital (JCUH) was halted due to workforce pressures
- Emergency action was taken to transfer the service to North Tees Hospital to ensure that patients could still receive this crucial service
- The Breast Diagnostic Service (also known as the Breast Symptomatic Service) is available to patients whose GP identifies them to have suspected breast cancer.
- NHS Standards insist that these patients should be seen within 14 days where possible.
- Patients still retain the option to have any subsequent treatment and follow-up appointments at any of the sites across the Tees Valley.

Work undertaken

- In November 2019, South Tees CCG launched a period of engagement looking at Breast Diagnostic Services and how they work for patients in South Tees - Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland areas.
- A press release and poster promoting the engagement activity was created and cascaded to stakeholders along with a link to the survey which was available for all patients who had accessed the Breast Diagnostic Service at University Hospital of North Tees since 1st January 2019, to complete
- Three public and stakeholder events were held; one in Redcar and two in Middlesbrough
- Two focus groups were arranged with two breast cancer support groups - Redcar Breast Cancer Support Group and Positively Pink Breast Cancer Support Group.
- A survey was developed and distributed
- In total 865 individuals contributed to the engagement

Themes from engagement

The Covid-19 Pandemic has halted some of the progress following the patient engagement exercise. Both North and South Tees Trusts have continued to collaborate to maintain the service for patients through very difficult times. Some themes identified from the engagement include;

- The Breast Diagnostic Service was evaluated well by survey respondents with 95% rating the service either good or very good
- Positive comments were made about the high standard of care received, the professionalism of staff, the excellent communication as well as the efficiency of the service.
- A number of respondents expressed their frustration with the closure of the James Cook service
- Linked to the above it was noted that some patients were unaware of the 'one-stop-shop' approach at North Tees, better communication of this would have supported reducing patient frustrations and uncertainty

Next steps

- Tees Valley system partners have agreed to implement and expand the use of innovative 'Free-Flap Surgery' (where appropriate), as part of the Breast Cancer pathway to improve outcomes for patients. This surgery is undertaken at James Cook Hospital and commenced in October 2021.
- The Northern Cancer Alliance has established a Managed Clinical Network for Breast Cancer Services:
The vision of the managed clinical network is to enhance the quality of breast cancer services including breast cancer screening, diagnostics and treatment services, thus enhancing care across organisations; jointly reducing inequality, improving outcomes and patient experience in alignment with the recommendations in the NHS Long Term Plan.
- Future plans for the service model will be progressed through this approach with an initial focus on building capacity and resilience in the breast imaging workforce.

Comments / questions raised by the Committee following the presentation can be accessed via <https://moderngov.middlesbrough.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=5232>.

2. A further update on the existing position was originally scheduled for the Committee meeting in March 2023, but it was agreed by the Committee Chair to delay this due to the ongoing pressure on NHS clinical teams.
3. Representatives from North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, and South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust are scheduled to be in attendance at this meeting to provide Members with an update on these services. A presentation has been prepared and can be found at **Appendix 1**.

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