

REGIONAL HEALTH SCRUTINY UPDATE

Summary

The Committee is requested to consider an update on the work of the regional health committees.

Detail

Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

1. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) is hosting (providing the Chair and support function) this Committee during 2023-2024.
2. The last meeting was held on 15 December 2023 (*note: the meeting was not quorate for some of the items considered*) and included the following agenda items:
 - Notes of the meeting held on 6 October 2023 (see **Appendix 1**)
 - Office for Health Improvement & Disparities: Community Water Fluoridation
 - North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB): NHS Dentistry Update
 - NHS England / Northern Cancer Alliance: Non-Surgical Oncology Outpatient Transformation
 - North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB): Tees Valley Winter Planning Update

In response to the community water fluoridation presentation, the Committee raised a number of issues / queries in relation to the perceived impact of the initiative, potential side-effects, whether enough was being done to address avoidable dental decay, and the need to continue encouraging the existing supervised toothbrushing programme within schools. Clarity around the intended consultation associated with the scheme was also sought, with the Committee broadly supportive of the proposals.

Regarding plans for the region's non-surgical oncology services, the Committee was again broadly supportive of the preferred option of clinical networks of tumour-specific hubs for outpatient appointments with treatment as close to home as possible. Members also welcomed assurance that work was ongoing to strengthen out-of-hours provision, with revised structures potentially benefitting any need for wraparound care (e.g. involvement of social care).

3. During consideration of the work programme for the remainder of the 2023-2024 municipal year, the Committee requested an informal briefing on Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust's (TEWV) use of restraint, a source of previous Member concern – this is likely to be arranged for late-February / early-March 2024.

4. In other matters of interest, the emergence of details of a proposed 'Partnership Agreement' as part of the ongoing development of the 'Group' model between North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT) and South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (STHFT) led to an informal (remote) Committee meeting being hastily arranged. This took place on 2 November 2023 to allow Members to consider and comment on these developments / proposals – a statement on behalf of the Committee was then submitted back to the 'Group' for consideration by the Joint Partnership Board as part of its final ratification of the 'Partnership Agreement' (which was due to be agreed on 15 November 2023).

Sustainability and Transformation Plan / Integrated Care System Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

5. Following a lengthy hiatus, Durham County Council (who support this Joint Committee) contacted scrutiny teams across the region in November 2022 with the intention of arranging a meeting for late-November / early-December 2022. However, following liaison with senior NENC ICB representatives, it was deemed that in light of the ongoing ICS briefings to the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee, a meeting of this Joint Committee (which involved similar Councillors) was likely to be a duplication and would not add value.
6. In wider regional health matters, NENC ICB is providing guidance in relation to staying well and assisting services during the current cold season. Its '*Here to Help this winter*' webpage promotes a range of advice on:
 - Looking after yourself
 - Think pharmacy first
 - GP practices
 - NHS 111
 - Urgent Treatment Centres
 - A&E and 999
 - Looking after your mental health
 - Be wise, immunise (vaccinations)

Further details can be found at <https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/here-to-help-winter/>.

7. Towards the end of 2023, NENC ICB issued announcements regarding significant investment into digital social care (<https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/news/posts/2-million-investment-in-digital-social-care/>) and women's health hubs in Sunderland, Gateshead and North Cumbria (<https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/news/posts/595-000-investment-in-women-s-health-hubs/>). A festive-themed campaign promoting top tips for babies having a safe sleep and highlighting the risks of co-sleeping was also launched prior to Christmas (<https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/news/posts/safe-sleeping-for-babies-campaign-launches/>).
8. More locally, NTHFT is leading a regional campaign to promote careers in health and social care and will be profiling various little-known-about roles over the coming weeks. Further details can be found at <https://www.nth.nhs.uk/news/the-healthcare-roles-you-may-not-have-known-about-regional-nhs-campaign-launches/>.

North East Regional Health Scrutiny Committee

9. No meetings are currently scheduled.

IMPORTANT: CHANGES TO HEALTH SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

10. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has recently confirmed that the anticipated new health scrutiny arrangements will come into force from 31 January 2024. The main focus of the changes is the removal of the power of health overview and scrutiny committees (HOSCs) to formally refer matters of concern relating to major service reconfiguration to the Secretary of State. Instead, the Secretary of State may act proactively, further to a request that he or she may receive from anyone – although such action will be subject to consultation with the HOSC, amongst others. Further details can be found at <https://www.cfgs.org.uk/blog-dhsc-confirms-new-health-scrutiny-arrangements-to-start-in-january/>.
11. In order to assist colleagues to meet the challenging deadline for engaging with neighbouring Councils, NHS commissioners and NHS providers to understand how local systems and arrangements will need to change, the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) has produced a short guide which can be found at <https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=health-scrutiny-and-the-new-reconfiguration-arrangements> as is also attached (see **Appendix 2**).
12. CfGS hosted a webinar (with DHSC personnel present) on 16 January 2024 where it was stated that the intervention of the Secretary of State would be seen a last resort, with the anticipation that all local mechanisms must first be exhausted as part of efforts to resolve any issues in relation to service reconfiguration. Critically, there would still be a strong expectation that NHS commissioners and providers fully consult with local HOSCs regarding proposals for service change.

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