

Update from Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire held on 19 July 2023.

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ACTIONS TO TAKE FORWARD BY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

1. In view of who now decides on water fluoridation (no longer LCC but the Minister of Health), the council to write to the area's Members of Parliament to ask for eastern Lincolnshire's situation to be reviewed by the Minister. It was agreed all three of the Partnership Councils should be making representations.
2. There will be a presentation on improvements to Boston Paediatrics on Tuesday August 1 at 6pm, so a consultation response can be made by East Lindsey councillors.

Dental Services in Lincolnshire

This update follows reports given in January 2023 and includes the impact of the closure of the BUPA Skegness Practice. The commissioning role for dental services now sits with the Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board, having transferred on April 1.

There is an annual plan set by the Lincolnshire ICB with a strategic direction with local decisions, where possible, whilst the current dental commissioning team is hosted by Nottingham and Nottinghamshire on behalf of the 5 East Midlands ICBs.

The current dental contract has limitations which impacts on the level of local flexibility. The contract was introduced in 2006, stopping dentists setting up on an ad hoc basis. Dental Activity payments were capped in the new contract and patients were able to visit any practice that had capacity to treat them. The changes led to many practices going private.

In the pandemic dentists were required to prioritise urgent dental care, vulnerable patients including children and anyone at higher risk of oral health issues. So there was insufficient capacity to carry out routine dental checks. However the backlog of patients needing help is now being reduced. NICE has stated that routine checks should be based on individual need as discussed with the practitioner and not on a six monthly basis.

East Lindsey is listed as having 12 practices with one able to provide NHS Orthodontic services. Louth and Skegness have practices which offer out of hours cover during, weekdays, weekends and some bank holidays. Help for people needing emergency care is signposted via ringing 111. People with special needs, for whatever reason, can access help in Louth.

Dental activity in Lincolnshire in May this year is 65%, whilst the Midland average is 78% and the national average 76%. In March the Lincolnshire figure had been 88% and the Midlands average 102%.

Private dentists are not included as they are not within the scope of the Lincolnshire IDB.

A procurement exercise is currently being undertaken to find a new dental practice for the Mablethorpe area and the team is in the final stages of this. Until then emergency care will continue to be delivered from the Marisco Medical Centre and this will continue until November.

Arrangements have also been made in Skegness to access dental care whilst a long term procurement plan is developed. Interim urgent dental care sessions have been commissioned for a 24 month period from July to incumbent providers within the locality - this could number 4380 patients per year. Urgent dental care sessions commissioned will be delivered from existing dental practices in Skegness, Louth and Woodhall Spa in addition to their current contract activity arrangements. "We continue to explore other options for additional activity and urgent dental care provision in Skegness and the surrounding area."

Fluoridisation in Lincolnshire

Already over 6m people in the country have fluoride added to their water, so that is approximately 10% of the nation. From last November the responsibility of adding fluoride to our water transferred to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Now authorities have to undertake a feasibility study - this reduces the technical challenges authorities suffered in the past given water flows don't necessarily follow county boundaries.

Already approx a quarter of a million enjoy artificially fluoridated water supplies in Lincolnshire, taking in Lincoln, Gainsborough, Market Rasen, Sleaford and Grantham. But Anglia Water is working on proposals to extend this area.

Building on the Lincolnshire Dental Strategy, in which improving oral health is a preventative measurement, there would be a measurable improvement, particularly where there are people at risk of developing oral disease, if fluoride was added to our water supply in eastern Lincolnshire. (Almost a quarter of five year olds suffer from tooth decay!) Fluoride is a safe and effective public health intervention and councils on the east coast, i.e. the partnership area, are encouraged to write to their MPs to encourage the Minister to investigate the possibility of Anglian Water extending its coverage to include East Lindsey, Boston and South Holland.

Consultation on mental health rehabilitation at Ashley House in Grantham.

This was carried out from January 16 to March 31. Ashley House is a 15 bed, low dependency unit which has been closed since February 2021 as a result of the pandemic and staffing issues. In the meantime there has been a community service. Following numerous high level meetings, it has been recommended the facility closes indefinitely. The community rehab service is to be extended across a wider geography as it has been shown patients have achieved positive outcomes. It was agreed the closure should in this case then be made permanent. The community service will be extended building on what was learnt during the consultation.

Update on Adult Mental Health Services in the county.

The Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust provides mental health services throughout the county and also provides some learning disability, autism and social care services in Lincolnshire.

The lasting impact of the Covid pandemic and the cost of living crisis has led to a rising demand for mental health services when people reach crisis point. The need for support has never been greater, which is reflected in the increase in referrals. With a view to improving patient experience working with partners is helping to assist people at different stages of wellbeing where people do not necessarily need to access specialist secondary mental health services.

The Trust admits whilst this support has increased, crisis and home treatment provision needs to be reviewed. Hence there is a robust evaluation and engagement exercise about crisis support in Lincolnshire. The county was chosen as one of 12 pilots to be early implementers of a transformation programme. Committed to treatment of care in the right place, in the right place and at the right time, there have been ambitious plans to transform how community services are designed, developed and delivered in an integrated way - with an emphasis on services being available within local communities.

This area has seen the development of Community Connectors and Hubs as well as Nightlight Cafes. There is also now a How Are You website, which is hosted by LCC, that brings together where and how support can be accessed. GPs are working to ensure clear pathways between services, some being available at local surgeries. Shine, the charity, is also working within this area. Waiting times are closely monitored to ensure waiting times are kept as short as possible.

Talking Therapies are now available for residents from 16 upwards with clear transition protocols for young people as they move into adult care at the age of 18. People aged 65 and over who present with new episodes of mental health issues generally have treatment within the community health services for older people.

There is now a 24 hour mental health helpline that people in difficulties can talk about their difficulties. It is delivered by Mental Health Matters and provides a listening ear and signposting. They can refer to one of the Crisis Teams, which are located at Boston, Grantham, Lincoln and Louth. Very urgent needs are seen within four hours and urgent needs within 24 hours. Boston has a 24/7 support mental health team through A and E. At Lincoln Hospital a patient can have a rapid assessment of their mental health needs in an appropriate safe environment. The changes have actually resulted in less attendance at A and E, these have been so successful further funding has been forthcoming. There is also a mental health practitioner working alongside Lincolnshire Police in their control room.

Two new Wards have now opened within the Peter Hodgkinson Unit at Lincoln County and these provide individual en-suite bedrooms, improved ward spaces and safe outdoor areas for people to access freely. These wards were designed after extensive collaboration with staff, patients, carers and stakeholders. Planning permission has also been granted for the Norton Lea site in Boston, which will replace Ward 12 at Boston Hospital. It will house the Boston crisis team.

Carers have not been forgotten and extra support for them is now being put in place.

Staffing levels impacted on the Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit and this was mothballed in October 2022 on the grounds of safety. The Trust now feels it has solved staffing problems to such an extent that this service will partially open in November, with a full re-opening in March 2024. There is a comprehensive programme to recruit and retain staff for all roles within adult mental care.

There has been substantial investment in mental health services over the last few years and the Trust will continue to review how services are delivered to meet the needs of our residents. Workforce continues to be the biggest challenge however and innovative ideas are being trialled. The agenda contains a list of all mental health services in the county and this is available on line.

Lincolnshire Acute Services Review - Urgent and Emergency Care and Acute Medicine Update.

Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board's Director of Strategic Planning, Integration and Partnerships, Pete Burnett linked to the council to deliver the report. This review has been on-going since August 2017 and has been designed to maximise clinical, operational and financial sustainability.

He said that orthopaedics had now been consolidated at Grantham but a dedicated day-case centre at Louth County Hospital will be coming in the autumn. Stroke services are to be consolidated at Lincoln County supported by an enhanced community stroke rehabilitation service. Grantham and District Hospital's A and E service is to become a 24/7 Urgent Treatment Centre. Integrated community/acute medical beds at Grantham will be developed in place of the current acute medical beds.

Phase 3 of the implementation of new services will look at how Urgent Treatment Centres go forward to avoid duplication in service offering and ensure that services are fully integrated. It has been mooted that it might be better for United Lincolnshire to run the UTCs but no date has been put on when this might be implemented.

Paediatric Services at Boston

It was reported that the committee have taken part in the consultation, which runs until September 4, and they have written to say they are pleased to note that nursing and medical recruitment has gone well so far and that this continues. The committee was satisfied that the model is in the best interests of children and their families in Boston and the surrounding area, as well as Lincolnshire as a whole. It was accepted that children with complex or specialist needs will continue to be transferred to tertiary or specialist centres but asked that the number of transfers from the unit continued to be monitored as a measure of impact on the local community.

Chairman's Announcements

The October meeting will be changed to October 4.

He noted that the NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board has approved the pre-consultation business case for the Humber Acute Services Programme and the scope will be urgent and emergency care and paediatrics. He added that certain services would be consolidated at Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital at Grimsby rather than at Scunthorpe, the cost of capital funding at the former was put at £25m, compared with £89m at Scunthorpe. Details of the changes to individual services are available on the July agenda.

A CQC report on the Hawthorne Medical Practice in Skegness following a visit on July 12 gives a rating of "requires improvement" but the practice is no longer in special measures with significant improvements having been made to the quality of care. Issues in need of improvement are: review of the practice nurse appointment system; prescriptions of steroids to asthma patients; recording of immunisation of all staff; review of patient safety alerts; uptake of cancer screening and childhood immunisation; establishing a patient participation group and analyse data from the telephone system to better meet demand.

Maz Fosh, Chief Executive of Community Health Services will stand down on July 31 after four years in the post. The LCHS and ULHT Trusts will, in future, share a Chief Executive and Andrew Morgan will take up the joint role from August 1. He is due to stand down next March, so the recruitment process for a new Joint Chief Executive will soon be underway nationally.