

Lincolnshire Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire – 15 May 2024

* Please note that on account of the forthcoming general election, the June meeting may not go ahead. This is unfortunate for Louth in particular as one of the items on the agenda is the Urgent Treatment Centre. I have, however, spoken to the MP and she has reassured me that she has conferred with the Integrated Care board about this very subject...and when I stressed the value of the centre to our community she was very much in support.

GP practice provision: The committee was told GPs are working hard to meet the needs of patients, providing new services, more access and the highest number of appointments per 1000 population above baseline in the Midlands. Appointment data from February shows activity levels in General Practice were 452,704, a rise of 38.8% compared to August 2019 before new models of consultation came in. It is admitted there are challenges to sustain this delivery “unless real-time investment is made in general practice, the wider NHS and social care system.

GP practices currently receive on average £165 per patient, per annum. This is only a £13 increase since 2015 which equates to a 20% real term decrease in funding. A picture of increased demand over all age groups was painted and health concerns have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

General Practice is said to have changed significantly over the last three years. There is now online consultation, triage and increased access through on-line tools with time previously used for admin and simple medical conditions now used for increased support for patients with more complex needs - but increased patient requests has nullified this. So a blended approach is now used.

In Lincolnshire we have above the national average for same day appointments (44.6 compared with 43.5% with face to face appointments 66.9% against 66.6%) but it is noted that sustaining current service is not viable if financial, workforce and demand pressure continue or escalate. It is suggested more should be done, however.

Nationwide almost three quarters of practices were concerned inflation would affect their financial stability, the increase in the National minimum wage and the rise in electricity costs have added pressure leading to over half of the national practices considering halting recruitment and considering staff redundancies. This is leading to many staff going into the private sector. Indeed, such is the strain on resources practices are losing money on taking blood pressure or removing stitches. Long hospital waiting lists exacerbates supporting patients with medical conditions.

Lincolnshire People Board Strategy for recruiting and retaining talent: The report updates the last report in March 2023. A momentum has now built up in terms of delivering the workforce vision and over the past year positive trends have continued in key areas e.g., turnover, sickness, staff engagement scores, stability of staff through agency usage and vacancy rates. The challenges are considerable, but several key people have joined over the past 12 months. There is now a One Workforce brand which has been showcased at Careers Fairs including those of the Armed Forces. There is a One Workforce Social media presence, notably LinkedIn. There continues to be a focus on international recruitment of nurses and there is pastoral care, and a new website, on offer for new recruits to help them settle in.

A rural and coastal programme has focused on increasing health and care roles. An exemplar programme to encourage retention now has two new People Promise Managers working for the Partnership Trust and in primary care. To ensure development of the workforce the team has concentrated on creating a strong sense of community and promoting career development at all levels - and they are working with Boston College on this. There has been the removal of system fragmentation to a streamlined engagement process to ensure fair and equitable access to career

support services at a local level. They have also prioritised engagement with students from 14 to 25. A work programme is being developed building on successes so far, increasing diversity, accessing Levelling Up funding and advancing educational collaboration between colleges and the university to ensure it's possible to train and retain in all healthcare and caring careers in Lincolnshire.

* Further information about the Lincolnshire People Plan is available on Google.

Lincolnshire NHS Joint Forward Plan: the amended plan is now available at Documents Library - Lincolnshire ICB.

Review of NHS constitution: An eight-week consultation began on April 29 and is available on line. Changes include reinforcing the commitment to provide single sex wards, rapid review rights when a patient is deteriorating, providing patients with clear information about appointments, strengthening the responsibility of Patti cancel or reschedule appointments if they cannot attend, providing patient centred physical and mental healthcare tailored to individual needs, reinforcing the NHS's commitment to unpaid carers.

Humber Acute Services Review: A decision on the way forward for service changes at Scunthorpe and Grimsby Hospitals has been delayed yet again (it was expected in March) but could now be July as all consultation feedback is still being analysed.

Board Meeting: This month saw the first meeting of the Lincolnshire Community and Hospitals NHS Group. It is stressed the two Trusts involved are not merging and retain their separate identities. However, they are working together ever more closely for the benefit of the Lincolnshire community and we can expect a unified strategy in due course.

Confronting Antimicrobial Resistance: This month the government came up with a new national plan to protect humans and animals from the risk of drug resistant infections. This plan will see the reduction in the use of antibiotics, anti fungals and antivirals, strengthen the surveillance of drug resistant infections before they emerge and incentivise the industry to develop the next generation of treatments. Already around 8000 die from drug resistant infections every year and without caution this will increase.