

Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire – Wednesday 19 February 2025

Humber Acute Services Review: The reply from the Secretary of State for Health is still awaited and due within days. An update will hopefully be available at the March meeting.

Director of Public Health annual Report 2024 - this report is produced by Derek Ward on an annual basis. The theme this year is Integrated Care Close to Home, Creating Healthy Communities in Lincolnshire. This report - available on the county council Health Scrutiny website and is worth reading - is good news for East Lindsey as it recognises more resources are needed locally to sustain community, primary care and care services, not least as our communities age. Primary Care provides almost 90% of NHS contacts each year but is overshadowed by discussions about emergency departments and hospital care and this needs to be rebalanced. Increased demand and pressures in primary and community care is already creating problems with timely access with both patients seeking care, and those providing it, less satisfied with the way services are delivered than they ever have been.

These pressures can also be expected to widen existing health inequalities as people with the greatest health needs but poorest access are the most likely to be impacted. Increasing spending, the author stressed, is not the answer, it needs new ways of working. New relationships between the services and communities are needed and patient centred services must be designed whilst maximising the effect of all the community assets. People are living longer but do so in poorer health the over 65s is expected to rise by 41% by 2043 whilst the over 85s are expected to double over the same period - so needs will increase. It is recognised the north and east of Lincolnshire is already lagging behind!

Priorities will be

- prioritising prevention and supporting people to take the lead in their own care streamlining access and a shift towards technology
- multidisciplinary teams bringing personalised care closer to home.

So, we need to focus on developing a new focus on prevention, innovate the delivery of care through digitalisation, deliver person centred care in neighbourhoods through integrated and multidisciplinary teams, support and invest in the workforce to embrace new models of care.

Stroke Services: Back in May 2022 the Board approved key changes to the configuration of four NHS services - orthopaedics, urgent and emergency care, acute medicine and stroke services. This is the third time implementation reports have been back to Health Scrutiny and members were told that stroke services have now been consolidated at the Lincoln site. Improvements are already being noted in therapy staffing and the stroke services have a new pathway. Meanwhile, planned building and pathway improvements continue with a target date of December 2026. The next challenge is to reduce the length of stay from 18 days at present down to 10 - the best in the country is two days! There is now a joint acute and community stroke board, working with partners, and there are plans for an enhanced

Community Stroke Rehabilitation Team. Unfortunately, two locum consultants left ULHT which brought forward the closure of the Boston Stroke Ward in September 2023 to ensure patient safety. Nationally 48 % of hospitals had at least one unfilled stroke consultant post, stroke was the second most likely speciality to have a locum and all three major therapeutic professions, as well as psychologists, report staffing shortages. There are concerns without adequate staffing the service would go to Nottingham, which is not a good solution for Lincolnshire, and stroke is still time critical. So things are in a fragile state! The service has been asked to return in September to show improvements. Meanwhile the CLEAR project is looking to bring together a clinical model for the complete stroke pathway across hyper acute, acute care and community care. Happily at Lincoln there is an exemplary Advanced Care Practitioner workforce and at present work has started with exploratory interviews with 60 stroke staff to

understand the current pathway. The Trust is also working with the Ambulance Trust to bring in video triage for stroke patients. Anyone wanting more in depth stroke information should go to the Health Scrutiny website.

Lincolnshire NHS Dental Services: The committee last heard from the service in April 2024, and they had agreed to update the committee in 2025. From January to June last year a total of 192,184 accessed dental services, that's 25 % of the county population, a figure that is lower than the national average. In the 0-17 age range 59,777 accessed care, which is 41%, again lower than the national average of 43% and in the adult group the figure was 132,476, a rate of 21%, compared with a national average of 22%.

Access is most challenging on the east coast, South Holland and Boston. Officers regretted the numbers failing to attend for appointments. It was revealed once people have their initial problems sorted out, they fail to attend follow up appointments. So, it was agreed it was important to increase awareness. Dentistry is an important facet in healthy lives. Poor oral health influences general health, which links in with deprivation. The aim of the strategy being put forward by the Integrated Care Board is to create a plan for the next two to three years to achieve improvements. There are four main pillars for improvement - developing the dental workforce; improving access to services; increasing focus on prevention and integrating oral health into wider health care services.

Prevention strategies have seen investment at Boston, there has been continued delivery of the Smiles initiative and the over 65yrs are being surveyed as part of the Dental Epidemiology programme and participation in the National Smile Month. There has been investment in training and recruitment with an increased number of Golden Hello applications worth £20,000 in incentives - 11 applied in Lincolnshire for the National scheme and four were accepted with the remaining seven approved in a local scheme - and training courses for dental teams in courses such as fluoride varnish.

An innovative local scheme, which includes dental practices, allows for patients attending also being invited to take blood pressure checks as well as diabetes checks and this runs to the end of July at Specsavers and My Dentist, both in Skegness. There are two pilots in Boston too. There was praise for the new Mablethorpe Dental Practice which is now up and running. It was stated calling Lincolnshire a "dental desert" should never be used, it did nothing for recruitment! It was added that the Dental Contract looked like being reviewed but there was no timeline available. Planning guidance would however be published soon and then a more definite programme for the coming year could be created with a priority to deliver against the county's health needs.