

Great Western Ambulance Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Friday 29th February 2008 at 10.30am

Swindon Borough Council Civic Offices

PRESENT: - Councillors Lesley Alexander (Bristol City Council), Sylvia Townsend (Bristol City Council), Bill Payne (Bristol City Council), Margaret Edney (Cotswold District Council) Councillor Andrew Gravells (Chair) (Gloucestershire County Council), Margaret Nolder (Gloucestershire County Council), Ray Ballman (Swindon Borough Council), Andrew Bennett (Swindon Borough Council), Peter Mallinson (Swindon Borough Council)

1. Appointment of Chair

Resolved – That Councillor Andrew Gravells be appointed as Chair for the period of twelve months.

2. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

3. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

4. Public Forum

No questions were asked.

5. Approval of Terms of Reference and Principles of Communication

Emma Powell, Scrutiny Officer for Swindon Borough Council and Support Officer for the Committee presented the draft Terms of Reference and Principles of Communication for the Committee.

Members raised the following issues in relation to the draft Terms of Reference:

- The importance of ensuring that the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) in the Great Western Ambulance region are engaged with the Committee, once established.
- That the Committee should engage with any transitional arrangements in place within local authority areas prior to the establishment of a LINK.
- That South Gloucestershire and North Somerset Councils are considering the proposal to participate in the Committee at their respective Full Council meetings on 19th March 2008 and 1st April 2008.

No issues were raised in relation to the draft Principles of Communication.

Resolved – (1) That the officers involved in preparing the draft Terms of Reference and Principles of Communication be thanked for their efforts.
(2) That the draft Terms of Reference and Principles of Communication be approved.

6. Approval of Work Programme

Emma Powell, Scrutiny Officer for Swindon Borough Council and Support Officer for the Committee presented the draft Work Programme for the Committee.

Members raised the following issues in relation to the draft Work Programme:

- That an additional meeting be included in the work programme to which representatives from trade unions that operate within the Great Western Ambulance Trust be invited to attend to discuss their views regarding the performance of the Trust.
- That Members visit an ambulance station in a rural and urban location to meet informally with front-line staff.
- That consideration is given to seeking feedback from representatives from Fire and Rescue Services and Police Forces that operate in the Great Western Ambulance area regarding relationships with the Great Western Ambulance NHS Trust.
- That officers supporting the Committee develop a draft protocol outlining how the Committee will engage with Great Western Ambulance staff.
- That the work programme is a flexible and should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Resolved – (1) That the draft Work Programme be approved subject to the amendments identified by the Committee.
(2) That the Scrutiny Officers supporting the Committee produce a draft protocol outlining how the Committee will engage with Great Western Ambulance staff for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

7. Great Western Ambulance NHS Trust: Overview of Roles & Responsibilities and Performance

Rachel Pearce, Director of Corporate Development, Steve West, Director of Operations and Dr Ozzie Rawstone for the Great Western Ambulance NHS Trust made a presentation to the Committee regarding the performance of the Trust in relation to key performance indicators and service delivery. Issues raised included:

- The performance management regime including weekly conference calls between Trust management, Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust and NHS South West and monthly reports to the Trust's Board.
- An overview of performance data as at January 2008 regarding national targets for response times.
- Since January 2008, the Trust has met the national target to respond to 75% of Category A (life threatening) 999 calls within 8 minutes

- A summary of activity within the Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire sectors to improve performance regarding response times, including the introduction of drive zones for urban, semi-rural and rural areas.
- The establishment of clinical teams of 11 staff, lead by a Clinical Team Leader across the Trust resulting in an increase in the hours available for ambulance activity.
- The critical role of the flexibility and commitment of staff in implementing changes across the organisation to improve performance.
- The likely impact of the introduction of Call Connect on performance, which will record the time taken for the Trust to respond to a call from the moment it is registered on the telephone switchboard, and steps being taken by the Trust in preparation for the roll out of Call Connect in April 2008.
- Steps taken by the Trust to improve the skill-mix of staff, including the training of Emergency Care Practitioners by Coventry University and the University of West England and the creation of a clinical support network.
- The recruitment of new paramedics and the delivery of training by the University of West England, with the aim of operating slightly above the full establishment of the work force to minimise the impact of routine staff turnover.
- Measures taken to improve infection prevention and control, such as the roll out of 'make ready teams' to disinfect and restock ambulances, the introduction of a new uniform and the introduction of disposable mops.

Following the presentation, members were given the opportunity to put questions to the officers. Issues raised included:

- The role of Community First Responders, the training available and the number of volunteers across the Trust and their locations.
- Activity with acute Trusts, Primary Care Trusts and the Strategic Health Authority to reduce hospital turnaround times.
- The variance in response times within drive zone areas, particularly the variance in performance between urban and rural areas.
- The technology used to record when a response vehicle has arrived at the scene of an incident and the time taken for the response is calculated, which has increased consistency and accuracy in the recording of response times as an automatic system is now used.
- The role of Clinical Support Desks in obtaining patient history from the out of hours services
- Activity to promote diversity within the workforce and to raise awareness of the service delivered by the Trust amongst hard to reach groups.
- How statutory training is delivered to staff and what it consists of.
- How new staff are attracted and recruited
- How staff sickness is managed and the reasons for the variance in staff sickness across the Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire sectors
- That the Trust has received 257 compliments since April 2008

Resolved – (1) That the presentation and detailed report be noted and the officers from the Great Western Ambulance Trust thanked for their informative answers to members' questions.

(2) That the Great Western Ambulance Trust submits a detailed performance report to all future meetings of the Committee.

(3) That the Great Western Ambulance Trust presents the following information to the next meeting of the Committee:

- Information regarding the number of Community First Responders, their location and usage
- Hospital turnaround times for all acute Trusts in the Great Western Ambulance region
- Response times broken down to District level

(4) That the Great Western Ambulance Trust circulates the draft Diversity Strategy to all Chairs of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees in its region for comment.

8. Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust: Overview of Commissioning Arrangements and Performance Management in relation to Great Western Ambulance NHS Trust

Hazel Braund, Director of Communication, Performance and Planning from Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust presented a report summarising the commissioning arrangements for the Great Western Ambulance Trust. Issues raised included:

- Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust is the lead commissioner for ambulance services provided by the Great Western Ambulance Trust, with the role of co-ordinating the commissioning process and reducing the number of interfaces that the service provider is required to have with primary care trusts when negotiating contracts.
- There are seven Primary Care Trusts that commission services from the Great Western Ambulance Trust.
- Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust has weekly telephone conference calls with the Trust and NHS South West to monitor the performance of the Trust and a monthly meeting with the Trust.
- Linkages between the Great Western Ambulance Trust and other organisations are very important, such as primary care urgent care strategies.
- Individual Primary Care Trusts are responsible for monitoring and managing performance with the Trust and their acute trusts regarding hospital turnaround times.
- There is no formula for funding ambulance services. Benchmarking is currently underway to compare funding for the Trust in comparison with similar Trusts nationally.

Following the presentation, members were given the opportunity to put questions to the officers. Issues raised included:

- Whether the levels of funding within individual sectors of the Trust is adequate.

- The use of financial penalties or incentives in contracts between Primary Care Trusts and acute Trusts to improve hospital turnaround times.
- The role of the Strategic Health Authority in monitoring the performance of the Trust.

Resolved – (1) That Hazel Braund be thanked for her useful report and presentation.

(2) That the results of the benchmarking exercise to compare the levels of funding of the Great Western Ambulance Trust with ambulance Trusts nationally be shared with the Committee once complete.

9. Summary of Key Issues & Next Steps

Councillor Gravells thanked everyone for attending the first meeting of the Committee.

It was noted that it would be useful to have the Chief Executive of the Great Western Ambulance Trust and Gloucestershire primary care Trust at future meetings but that their absence today was unavoidable.

Resolved – (1) That the Support Officers be thanked for their work in organising today's meeting.

(2) That the next meeting will consider the performance information that had been requested at today's meeting.

(3) That the Scrutiny Officers supporting the Committee will arrange the date of the next meeting in due course.

(4) That the next meeting will be held at the Bristol City Council Council House. Support officers will explore options for Members to visit Bristol Ambulance Station to meet informally with staff before the meeting.