

Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

13 December 2006

Pathways for Change Task Group – Update Report

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Committee about the work of the Pathways for Change Task Group since the last meeting on 19 September 2006.

Background

2. The Pathways for Change Task Group has been a standing task group since West Wiltshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) took the decision to close Bradford on Avon and Westbury Community Hospitals part way through the engagement process that was being jointly run with Kennet & North Wiltshire PCT, to review and reshape community services in those parts of the county.
3. The Task Group was charged with monitoring the engagement and then consultation on Pathways for Change, providing a response to the consultation on behalf of the Committee, giving a view on the decisions and for monitoring implementation thereafter. It is implicit that the Task Group would also bring any concerns regarding the process to the full Committee for further consideration.
4. The Pathways for Change process has, since May 2005, been subject to a number of delays and interventions by the previous PCTs, Strategic Health Authority and the Audit Commission that have hindered the process and given cause for concern to members of the Task Group and the Committee alike.

Current Position

5. Kennet & North Wilts and West Wilts PCTs had originally begun consultation on the Pathways for Change proposals in April 2006 because they stated that it was imperative that decisions be taken prior to the merger of the Wiltshire PCTs in October 2006. This was supposed to provide a firm commitment from the old regime to the new, for the new organisation to take forward.
6. However, immediately prior to the merger both PCTs announced that decisions would be delayed because it was more appropriate for the new PCT to make decisions that it would be responsible for implementing.

7. At its November Board meeting the new PCT announced that decisions relating to Pathways for Change, and the sister consultation on mental health services, Mainstreaming Mental Health, would be taken at its meeting on 16 January 2007.

The Task Group

8. Following the formation of the Wiltshire PCT at the start of October 2006, the PCT requested a series of three meetings with the Task Group before Christmas to discuss a number of issues, including the timeframe for decision making, the PCT's answers to further questions submitted by the Committee at the time of the consultation and transport.
9. The Task Group met with the PCT on 17 and 23 November and was due to meet again on 4 December, but due to illness this did not take place. Instead the Task Group members met to discuss the work they would undertake prior to and following the PCT Board decision on 16 January 2007. The Task Group met the new Chief Executive of the Wiltshire PCT at the first meeting.
10. The Task Group has been concerned about the delays throughout the Pathways for Change process and in particular the impact the early closures of Bradford on Avon and Westbury, without consultation, have had on services within the protracted timeframe.
11. The Task Group is mindful that, if Pathways for Change had followed its original timescale, the communities of Bradford on Avon and Westbury would have received details of their future services much earlier in 2006. Now it will be almost a full year later than originally intended.
12. The Task Group is also concerned that the reconfiguration of PCTs has caused the Pathways for Change process to lose momentum and that the reasons for delays and updates have not been adequately communicated to the public. The Task Group fears that the delays may have caused the public to lose interest in the process.
13. The Task Group will continue to meet with the PCT, to monitor the situation in the various communities affected and to report back any findings to the Committee. A series of meetings have been planned after the PCT Board meets on 16 January, in order for the Task Group to feed its views into the Committee by 12 February.

Conclusions

14. Decisions on proposals from the Pathways for Change consultation will be made by the Wiltshire PCT on 16 January 2007.
15. The Task Group expresses its concern regarding the delays and interventions, which it feels have hindered the process and caused it to lose credibility.

16. The Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee will need to meet to discuss the decisions taken by the Wiltshire PCT following the Board meeting on 16 January.

Recommendations

17. The Task Group recommends that the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee makes provision to meet quickly after the PCT Board meeting to discuss the decisions taken by the Board on that occasion.

Financial Implications

18. There are no financial implications for the County Council in this report.
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