

Hertfordshire Health Scrutiny Committee Report for the Health in Dacorum Meeting of 8th December 2021

At its meeting on 11.10.21, Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC's) Health Scrutiny Committee (HSC) received presentations and held discussions regarding the following subjects:

Winter pressures – Report by the Hertfordshire and West Essex Clinical Commissioning Groups' Deputy Leader

The Committee was informed that pressures on healthcare provision still exists due to shortages in staff and bed availability, resulting from the current and legacy demands of Covid-19 and staff leaving the service. There is also expected to be additional pressures resulting from the lack of exposure to 2020 winter flu, as the public would not have developed normal levels of immunity. Members were therefore reminded to encourage the public to utilise the 111 telephone service rather than GP services, as a first point of contact for minor health matters and to also utilise the expertise of local pharmacies where appropriate. The matter of distribution vaccine of the Pfizer variant at pharmacies was discussed and it was confirmed that it was available to selected pharmacies. However, it was acknowledged that storage was an issue. It was also acknowledged that there is currently a general shortage of the availability of the Astra Zeneca vaccine.

Emergency Mental Health issues were highlighted as being inadequate and putting patients at risk, as they often leave A&E before they can be assessed. The CCG was asked to investigate and report back the measures that could be put in place to mitigate these incidents. The question of patients being summerly discharged from waiting lists for regular hospital appointments was highlighted and the CCG stated that these should not be happening and committed to investigate and report back on why this happened to Hemel Hospital patients.

The issue of anti-vaxers disrupting the public vaccination events was also highlighted and it was acknowledged by all, that this is a serious matter and puts staff and the public at risk of injury and intimidation. It was agreed that further consideration needs to be given to resolving this matter.

St Albans and Harpenden Urgent Care Provision – Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group (HVCCG)

Urgent Care provision is a system that will provide a new level of urgent care provided to patients, where-by a telephone call to the 111 service can result in a booked appointment at the minor injuries unit in St Albans, these patients will be seen at an allocated time over and above those that who may have been waiting for a considerable period. It was acknowledged by HVCCG that there needs to be more consideration given to how this new service is implanted and also the process as to how it is communicated, in order to avoid any confusion by members of the public of this third semi emergency service.

East of England Ambulance Service Trust Update – Report of the East of England Ambulance Service Trust - Public Affairs Officer

The Officer gave an account of the pressures that the service is under and presented the statistics indicating its performance, a discussion was held around these issues. The level of abuse and attacks on ambulance staff was also discussed and how body cameras were being used as a preventative measure to help combat these instances and also record abuse if it happens, a question was raised as to whether this might compromise patient confidentiality and the Committee was assured that the cameras were only activated if necessary and used to record an abuser.

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