

Modernising Local Health Care

The Board of Newbury Primary Care Trust is holding a meeting, 'Modernising Local Health Care', on Monday 5th November at 1. 30 p.m. with a buffet lunch at 1 p.m. for those who pre-book with Steph Bennett on 01635 23500 x 2367. This is the opportunity for Alliance members to turn up and explain to the Board the need for a coherent approach in providing for local neurology patients. We hope to see you there. No Guy Fawkes comments please!

New local neurology prevalence data

Newbury PCT recently conducted a very limited count for the prevalence of just half a dozen neurology conditions, at our request. The surprises in the data prompted further counting, with further surprises duly revealed, and it's been great to see the PCT coming back pretty promptly for a third bash at getting even more and better data. This topic remains one of our key areas of concern so we have submitted a bid to the local NHS Development Fund to try to get more resources behind this work, reflecting the high priority we attach to it.

Needs survey launch imminent

Our proposed survey of the health and social care needs of local neurology patients is close to launch. Getting ethics approval and resolving the associated administrative aspects is almost there. We will start with surveying one neurology condition in all patients in 2 GP practices, and roll out from there. It will be a long haul, and we've reserved a big chunk of funds to see this work through. The results will be analysed independently.

AGM 'Moving mountains'

Dr Christine Collin, Consultant in neuro-rehabilitation gave a fascinating talk, ranging from robotics and cannabis to transport systems and state benefits at our second AGM at the end of September. She tackled questions from all quarters with great aplomb, and many mutual interests shared by her profession and the voluntary sector were in evidence. 'I need a clone of myself' she quipped, in reference to the resources needed to provide for so many neurology patients, leaving the audience to reflect on how much still has to be done to secure a fair level of core neurology services.

Earlier in the AGM Joyce Parker summarised the Alliance's achievements: increased membership, progress with the database on standards of care, our survey of specialist neurology nurses completed, our breakthrough in making a start on getting some local prevalence data, and our endeavours to secure our combined therapies proposals at Sandford. Our president, Lady Hallifax, gave the quote of the evening; 'you can move mountains!' she praised. Indeed you can.

The Executive Committee election result was:

Chairman: Joyce Parker
Vice chairman: David Roberts
Treasurer: Patrick McGrath
Secretary: John Holt
Executive: Gill Hall, Hilary Hinchliffe,
Chreanne Montgomery-Smith, Sandra Paget.

Joyce closed the AGM by urging to members to keep the new Executive on their toes. If members won't, Joyce surely will!

National Service Framework (NSF) for long term health conditions.

Alan Milburn has re-confirmed to us, via his minions, that the NSF **will** have a particular focus on neurology, after his earlier loss of focus when he suggested it might not. 2004 remains the publication date. Along the way, and come the time, we'll still be fully focused, on behalf of the 13000 or so diagnosed in West Berkshire with a neurology condition!

Consultation; or just accompli?

Perhaps we need to clarify why we comment so often on so called '**consultation exercises**'. There seems to be confusion about what the phrase means. Glance in the dictionary: '**Taking counsel, deliberation, conference, seeking information or advice, taking into consideration (feelings, interests)**'.

Meaningful consultation on health and social care issues will attract our praise. We also welcome relevant information, but will squarely criticise those who simply provide information then claim there has been 'consultation'. To those in doubt look up '**Fait accompli**' in the dictionary!

Specialist nurses, the benefits exposed

Your Executive has secured copies of new, and as yet unpublished, research into the work loads and effectiveness of specialist neurology nurses.

These show the cost effectiveness and other benefits of such posts. Some of the research was conducted in Berkshire, which should make the conclusions more persuasive to local service providers. We have asked Berkshire Health Authority to comment on the strategic issues, and eagerly await a response.

Who pays?

The previous 2 years have been unrewarding for us trying to secure funds for our 'combined therapies project', a much needed local service

for neurology patients. The local NHS Development Fund is tiny, and the Lotteries Board insist these services are for the statutory authorities to fund. Undeterred we are digging deeper into the many existing standards of care which are published on behalf of neurology patients, and trawling through the academic research, and freshening and revising our proposals so they are impeccably justified. NHS budgets may be precious, but there should be enough in that gigantic pot for neurology to get a better deal.

Newbury's new Hospital

The hospital notice board remains confusingly out-of-date, the papers still stating they're on course for 2002. If building had started in September 2001 we might have been on course for an opening in April 2003. So moving on...

Setting our priorities

Your previous Executive Committee was working to an agreed set of priorities, and the new Executive is anxious to review and update these. To do this well they really do need views and inputs from all members. In addition, offers of help, however limited, are also always appreciated. As soon as you've read this pick up the phone and let's hear from you!

Diary date to note:

Thurs. 29th November. Open meeting. 1400 hrs at St Joseph's hall. Speaker TBA.

Note your diaries now! All are welcome.

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