

Health bodies: change all round

Last April the Newbury and Community PCT began working informally with the Reading and Wokingham PCTs. Thames Valley Strategic Health Authority (SHA) has now proposed their formal merger to form the West of Berkshire PCT, and an interim management team has already been set up. The government has proposed a reduction in the number of SHA. Two options for the South East are being discussed. One involves the merger of Thames Valley with Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes. The second involves the additional inclusion of Kent, Medway, Surrey and Sussex to form an authority covering the whole of the South East. A public consultation exercise for both PCT and SHA mergers will be completed on 22nd March 2006.

Active Therapies Partnership

We are delighted to welcome the ATP as a fully-incorporated sub-committee of WBNA. *Singing for the Brain* sessions have been successful for over two years, providing social, physical and mental stimulation for people with dementia and their carers. A bid for additional funding has been made to the Lotteries Board to enable the programme to be extended, to include activities such as walking and yoga, and to make it available to all those with neurological conditions; so benefits should be delivered much more widely.

National Service Framework

The NSF for Long-Term Conditions, published in March 2005, focuses on neurological conditions. It contains 11 Quality Requirements (QRs) covering services from initial diagnosis to end-of-life-care. QRs

should be fully implemented by 2015 but many people are concerned at the slow progress being made so far. A Neurological Advisory Panel has been set up by the Department of Health and two National Directors (Czars) have been appointed to oversee delivery. One key initiative is to develop national standards for care and better metrics for use by the Health Care Commission when measuring the success of implementation. The Neurological Alliance, recognised as the national voice of patients with neurological conditions, has set up an Implementation Support Group to monitor progress and provide evidence to lobby for action. WBNA is represented on the Support Group and playing its part.

Neurosciences: building the regional network

The NSF for Long-term Conditions recommends that each health area establishes a Neuroscience Network to ensure the strategic development of services for patients with long-term neurological conditions. At an inaugural meeting in November 2005, the Thames Valley Neurological Network was set up to act as a forum for stakeholders/interested parties and to provide a mechanism to link with Local Implementation Teams with the Local Specialist Commissioning Group. West Berks and the Buckinghamshire Neurological Alliances have agreed to work together to form the Thames Valley Neurological Alliance to ensure adequate representation of neurological patients.

WBNA 2007 Conference

Evaluations from our last conference highlighted the strong desire to see the WBNA conference become a regular event. So we are

planning our third conference, once again with the collaboration of Professor Christine Collin and Penny Lilley. This time there will be two themes: Trauma and Degenerative Diseases.

Baroness Sue Greenfield, Director of the Royal Institution and Professor of Physiology at Oxford University has agreed to be the keynote speaker. The conference will be held on April 18th 2007 at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel, Padworth (just by the A4 and close to Aldermaston Railway Station).

Charity Pledge Auction

Newbury Rotary Club has organised a Charity Pledge Auction at Newbury Racecourse on 1st April 2006 from 18.30 - 22.00. The entry fee is £5.00 and includes a glass of wine and a finger buffet. WBNA have received 10 exciting and varied pledges ranging from hot-air ballooning lessons to bags of horse manure. We hope WBNA supporters will attend and place their bids. If you are unable to attend you can contact John Holt at 01635 33582, and he will place bids for you. Full details are provided on the enclosed flier. Please come and place a bid to support this local charity event.

Neuro nurse makes the TV News

The last newsletter announced the appointment of Carol Allen as the specialist nurse for rare and complex neurological conditions. Her work was the subject of a news item on Median TV on 4th January. This focused on a local patient who has motor neurone disease, and Carol described her input into managing the condition. Carol tells us that she is settling in and her caseload is rapidly growing, thus confirming the need for this valuable post.

The Alliance lobbies at Westminster

WBNA has written to Richard Benyon MP about Healthcare Commission assessment ratings, and the ways in which NHS trusts go about obtaining their star ratings. He kindly forwarded this letter to the Department of Health, and now the Minister of State has replied thanking the Alliance for its constructive ideas on future ways of working of the new consolidated Health and Social Care Commission. We will be monitoring very carefully to see that the new system does not disadvantage neurology patients.

Diary dates to note:

1st April at 18.30 to 22.00

Charity Pledge Auction
at Newbury Racecourse.

Further dates for **Open Meetings:**

11th May - Jan Bartlett, Interim Area Director
for Health, West Berks PCT,

13th July - Ian Cave, Thames Valley SHA

14th September - AGM,

9th November – Speaker to be confirmed

All except the AGM are at 1.45 for 2.00 pm at
St Joseph's Hall, Newbury.

Free admission includes tea and biscuits.

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