

National framework: Local implementation

Implementation of the National Service Framework for long term conditions will not be managed nationally, but will become locally driven from now, according to the DOH. Therefore we are delighted that South Central Strategic Health Authority (SHA) has reversed its earlier decision and now agreed to establish a South Central Region Neuroscience Network as the driving force to produce the information and evidence needed by local service commissioners to improve the way that services are designed and delivered. An initial Neuro Network Steering Group meeting takes place in October, following which we expect details will be published about how all interested individuals can become involved.

The only previous opportunity to develop a vision and strategy, covering all the services needed by neurology patients, fell apart when the previous SHA structure was abandoned.

In tandem, proposals to establish a Berkshire West Commissioning Advisory Group, to focus exclusively on the needs of neurology, seem likely to be agreed shortly. Ensuring a good flow of ideas and evidence into this group should help drive the programmes of change needed in Berkshire West that Alliance members have been seeking for so long.

The Alliance will continue to push to make up for all the lost years and lost opportunities. Priorities are to ensure that services are patient centred, rather than for the benefit of clinicians, based on prevalence of need rather than trapped in budgets and myths, are rebuilt around a justified workforce plan rather than around ad hoc excellence, and an all-out attack on the many gaps in local services.

Carol hits the 'top ten'

We are delighted the Department of Health responded promptly on seeing the impact study on the Berkshire West Rare Neuro Conditions Nurse Specialist post. DOH likes the idea as a 'top ten quick win' for all commissioners involved in implementing the NSF for long term conditions to consider. This is a most impressive result for Carol Allen to add to her CV and a tribute to everyone else who played their part in establishing the post and supporting the role. We are delighted that Carol's work can continue and we know those she supports are especially pleased!

AGM highlights

The Alliance's 2007 AGM was held on 3rd September. **Dr James Cave**, local GP and Chair of the Local GP Practitioners Committee, was guest speaker. His fascinating and sometimes tongue-in-cheek presentation included compelling data, from 3 continents, that closing hospitals leads to reductions in death rates! He produced slightly less robust but convincing evidence that GPs are altogether more effective clinicians than specialist consultants. Interestingly, he studiously avoided any mention of the worth of neuro nurse specialists. We all know the evidence there is gold plated!

The **Executive Committee** was elected with two changes. Thanks go to Steve Saunders who stepped down and to Irene Waters who joins for the first time. The others on committee are: David Roberts, Chairman; Joyce Parker, Vice Chair; David Woodhead, Treasurer; Fred Davison, Secretary; John Holt, Liaison Officer; Molly Davison, Gill Hall and Chreanne Montgomery-Smith. *Power-assisted*

exercise

The need for those with neurological disability to take exercise is generally similar to that of the general population. However, for those with specific exercise targets it can be difficult or impossible to use standard gym equipment.

In such cases the use of specially-designed Power-Assisted Exercise Machines may be a good option. A Manchester-based charity has created a gym filled with such equipment, exclusively for use by those affected by neurological conditions. The Alliance recently took part in a visit there to study their service and to see how the business is run.

Having seen the success of this service in a 'big city' setting we are working with others to see whether a similar facility can be justified to provide a useful and sustainable service in West Berkshire. It may make sense to run such a facility in conjunction with a hydro pool, although other options might also work well.

Hydrotherapy Pool Project

We are currently seeking suitably qualified individuals to form the Board of a new organisation to be known as Berkshire West Health and Well-being Social Enterprises to oversee the creation and ongoing management of the proposed West Berks Hydro Pool. The business will be established as a (not-for-profit) Social Enterprise.

The purpose of the pool is to provide specialist physiotherapy in the relatively weightless conditions of water, so providing health and well-being benefits to a broad range of people including those affected by rheumatism, neurological conditions, learning difficulties, post operative, sports injuries and pre/post natal to name but a few.

The feasibility study indicates that up to 800 users would utilise the pool each week, generating a strong cash flow and a robust and enduring business. The project has the support of many partners and the Steering Group is confident that suitable land can be found.

We need to secure, in a central location, an enduring community asset providing important therapy services that are otherwise unavailable except to those able to travel further afield. To become involved with this venture in any capacity contact John Holt on 01635 33582 or johnmholtbsc@aol.com

What's going on?

The newly formed West Berkshire **Fibromyalgia and ME/Chronic Fatigue** Group is holding an awareness event on Friday 19th October at the Baptist Church, Cheap Street, Newbury. 4 p.m. for 4.30 p.m., until 6 p.m. Contact Lindsey on 01635 529676 or lindseymiddlemiss@hotmail.co.uk

The annual **Newbury Shopping Day** for those with disabilities is on 22nd November.

Diary dates to note

Our final Open Meeting for 2007 will be held on 8th November 2007 at 1.45 for 2.00 pm at St Joseph's Church Hall, Newbury. Speaker Robyn Noonan will talk about the work of the Care Services Improvement Partnership. Free admission includes tea and biscuits.

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