

Neuro needs and NHS Primary Care

Dr Heike Veldtman, Thatcham GP and neuro lead commissioner, was the guest at our January open meeting. She outlined how the four Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in Berkshire West have developed a new framework to drive the development of neurological services. Members enjoyed a positive exchange of ideas with her and the Alliance looks forward to representing the needs of neuro patients as this initiative builds.

Neuro rehab in the spotlight

The Board at Royal Berks Hospital is considering relocating beds within the main site at Reading and a move of the Caversham Ward neuro rehab beds is under consideration. Staff whose jobs may be affected have already been consulted, then consultations with others should follow. We understand that faster discharge of stroke survivors means less stroke beds are needed than previously. We await more information and will monitor closely that the interests of patients are protected.

Thames Valley update

NHS Thames Valley has approved a project, 'Pharmacy and headache', where an over-riding objective will be a reduction in pharmaceutical consumption and more focus on other ways of managing pain. Sounds good!

The Thames Valley Mental Health, Dementia and Neuro Strategic Clinical Network is establishing a Strategic Neuro Forum and Steering Group to ensure more resources are devoted specifically to driving neurological service developments at regional level. Task and finish groups will delve into the detail, covering both health and social care services. Work will integrate with that of the CCGs in the region.

However, there is a review ongoing in Whitehall as to whether or not the Neuro Networks are a valuable idea. A decision is expected soon

Specialised commissioning

The NHS Specialised Commissioning Taskforce has indicated that a form of co-commissioning with CCGs will be introduced from April 2015 for specialised services. This is likely to be a form of 'soft' co-commissioning where initially budgets will be retained by NHS England, but full co-commissioning (including pooling of budgets and accountability between NHS England and CCGs) will happen in 2016.

Meanwhile, NHS England states slightly differently that commissioning responsibility for 1) specialised wheelchair services, and 2) outpatient neurology referrals made by GPs to Adult Neurosciences and Neurology Centres, will transfer from NHS England to CCGs from April 2015. We welcome such local accountability.

Grants for carers

We are delighted to invite carers (those looking after to a loved-one on a voluntary basis) to apply for a grant of up to £300 each, to take a break or breaks from their caring role. Applicants must live in the local authority areas of West Berkshire, Reading or Wokingham and provide care for at least fifteen hours a week. Grants are not restricted to those caring in a neurological context. Funds are limited and will be allocated on a rolling basis.

The application form is simple and decisions about awards will be made quickly, based on need and merit, using broad criteria, aiming to help relieve the pressures experienced by those in a caring role. There is no means test. Applications should be received before 31st March 2015, and successful grants spent within six months of the award. Further details are on the application form, available at johnmholtbsc@aol.com

WBNA conference 2016

The Alliance organises a high quality, self-financing, neuro conference every two years. In Spring 2016 our conference will be on: 'The relationship between Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Neurological Care'. Readers interested in helping to deliver this major event, please contact John, details above.

WBNA Secretary needed!

We are still looking for a Secretary, should anyone with the skills and time be available. To find out more contact John on johnmholtbsc@aol.com

West Berkshire Therapy Centre

We remain fully committed to supporting West Berkshire Therapy Centre. Neurological and other clients taking power-assisted exercise there continue to report improved mobility, improved well-being and better ability to carry out the tasks of daily living that everyone else takes for granted.

From April, the Centre plans to provide an evening and Saturday service in addition to the existing, expanding weekday service.

We recommend that you call in and see how this amazing facility is helping disabled people. Visit:
7, Clerewater Place, Lower Way,
Thatcham RG19 3RF
www.westberkshiretherapycentre.org.uk
Tel:01635 864561

Healthwatch at risk?

New rules for Healthwatch providers reduce opportunities for smaller groups to provide the service, a real risk as regards ensuring a good local service!

Dates for your diary

Open meetings:
Thursday 12th March and
Thursday 14th May
Speakers and themes to be announced.
St Joseph's Church Hall, Newbury.
1.45 for 2 pm. Everyone welcome!

West Berkshire Neurological Alliance

2 Clayhill Crescent Newbury RG14 2NP
Tel: 01635 33582 Fax: 01635 569177
Email: secretary@wbna.org.uk
www.wbna.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 1081021