

HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL
25 JULY 2012
CHOICE OF GP PRACTICE – THE PATIENT CHOICE SCHEME
REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The report provides a briefing on new plans being piloted in Nottingham, as well as parts of London and Greater Manchester, allowing patients to register with a GP (General Practitioner) of their choice. The report will be introduced by Jon Holliday, Assistant Director of Primary Care Contracting at NHS Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County.

2. Action required

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to consider and comment on the information in the report, and to consider how it wishes to be informed of the pilot scheme's progress.

3. Background information

- 3.1 In December 2011, the Health Secretary announced plans to operate a pilot scheme to enable patients in parts of London, Greater Manchester and Nottingham to register with a GP practice of their choice from April 2012. The start date was subsequently revised to July 2012, with the Patient Choice Scheme, as its known, starting in Nottingham on 23 July 2012.
- 3.2 The pilot sites were selected because they were perceived to have high numbers of commuters travelling into those areas. It would therefore mean that people would be able to sign up with a doctor close to their workplace, or child's school, rather than where they live.
- 3.3 The Panel requested a report on the pilot at its meeting on 23 May 2012 – minute 8 refers – and Appendix 1 provides further information on the operation of the Patient Choice Scheme pilot, how it will be introduced in Nottingham, and evaluation timescales. A press release will be issued to coincide with the pilot launch, and should be available at the meeting.

4 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING EXEMPT OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

None.

5 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

- 5.1 Minutes of May 2012 Health Scrutiny Panel meeting.

6. Contact information

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16 July 2012

Report for Health Scrutiny Panel – Choice of GP Practice – The Patient Choice Scheme

Introduction

In 2011 the Government announced a Choice of GP Practice pilot scheme which would be introduced in 2012. This was in response to its desire to increase the level of choice for patients when choosing a GP practice, and built on work going back to the previous Government. It runs alongside other current Department of Health initiatives for GP practices such as outer boundaries and list closures.

The Patient Choice Scheme has been set up to assist people who are away from their local practice area during the day, such as commuters and students, to access GP services away from their homes.

The scheme is being piloted in Central London, Manchester & Salford in addition to Nottingham, and GP practices can join the scheme on a voluntary basis. It will run initially until March 2013. Nottingham City's participation in the pilot is considered to be a good opportunity to influence policy and to shape the scheme, and reflects the advanced progress of the Clinical Commissioning Group and PCT Cluster and also our participation in the 111 pilot scheme.

How the scheme operates

There are two elements to the scheme, and participating practices must offer both elements to patients. Patients will be able to register with the GP practice even though they live outside the practice area ("out of area" patient), or alternatively have a consultation with the practice as a 'day patient' but remain registered with their current practice near their home. The practice will receive a fee for each day patient appointment.

Participating practices will not be responsible for home visits or out of hours arrangements for out of area patients – these remain the responsibility of the PCT where the patient lives. If patients require community services, these will be provided either by the community health teams attached to the practice, or by those near the patient's home. The PCT is gathering information from Community Providers in the East Midlands and Bassetlaw and South Yorkshire to support GP practices participating in the pilot.

The scheme in Nottingham

Once Nottingham's participation in the scheme was confirmed in December 2011, all practices in Nottingham City were written to asking for expressions of interest. This was followed by a meeting for interested practices with the Department of Health team and the PCT. Formal guidance for the scheme was issued by the Department in April 2012 and again all practices were notified and given a further opportunity to participate. From April to June 2012 further meetings with practices were held to explain the scheme and discuss practical questions and concerns.

Seven practices have applied to participate, with one practice having a branch surgery so the scheme will be offered from eight sites across the City. These sites cover the City Centre, Sneinton, Bakersfield, Wollaton, Bilborough & Beechdale. The scheme will begin in Nottingham on 23 July 2012.

The PCT has been working behind the scenes with the practices and other stakeholders to put in place the administrative processes necessary for the scheme. We will continue to closely support all the participating practices as they begin to see patients and throughout the pilot phase.

Informing the patient

Our Communications team have been working on a range of publicity aimed at patients which will be available in the participating practices. These explain the working of the scheme from the patient's perspective, and cover both the out of area and day patient elements in separate leaflets.

They have also liaised with the Department of Health and will issue a press release to support the start date.

Commissioning issues

Nottingham City PCT (CCG) becomes the responsible commissioner for out of area patients who register with participating practices. However there will be no adjustment to the PCT financial allocation to reflect the secondary care costs arising from the scheme during the pilot year. The financial allocation regime in the NHS means that money follows the patients in subsequent years.

Evaluation of the scheme

The Department of Health has commissioned a full evaluation of the scheme which will produce an interim report later in 2012 and a full report in Autumn 2013. Locally, we will monitor the uptake of the scheme as it is difficult at this stage to assess the likely uptake.

Jon Holliday
Assistant Director Primary Care Contracting
NHS Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County