

NHS North of Tyne – ongoing and upcoming activity Briefing

Re-procurement of the home oxygen service

Approximately 5,000 people in the North East of England use the Home Oxygen Service (HOS). The existing contract for the service comes to an end in November 2011.

Following a comprehensive tendering exercise undertaken by the Department of Health in conjunction with local primary care trusts a new provider - BOC Homecare - has been procured who will take over the contract from the current provider from November 2011.

There will be no disruption to the home oxygen service provided to patients although they may notice some changes in the equipment or type of oxygen therapy they receive. Homecare technicians will be transferring to BOC Homecare so patients will continue to receive their deliveries from the same staff.

The outgoing and incoming service providers have been undertaking direct communications with patients to ensure they are aware of the changes that affect them and to provide reassurance about the continuity and quality of the service. Training sessions for GPs have also been organised to support clinicians who prescribe oxygen during the change.

Diabetic retinal screening procurement

The procurement of a North of Tyne Diabetic Retinal Screening service (DRS) is the first of the recommendations from the 2008/9 review of diabetes services to be taken forward.

A key risk for diabetic patients is visual complications as a result of vascular changes behind the eye. In an effort to ensure early detection of changes to the eye, all newly diagnosed diabetic patients are referred into a retinal screening service and then recalled annually.

Currently diabetic retinal screening services are provided by two separate providers across Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. Procuring a North of Tyne service will improve the quality and capacity of DRS for patients in line with national standards.

To ensure patients views inform the procurement a survey was sent to over 1000 local members of Diabetes UK in August asking for their views of current provision and experience of diabetes services. Over 600 people completed the survey and the results have been used to inform the service specification for the new contract.

Formal procurement began in October and will end in February 2012. It is planned the new service will be up and running by October 1 2012.

Other aspects of the recommendations from the diabetes review will be taken forward by clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) for their areas/ populations.

NHS 111

The NHS in the North East plans to introduce a new service called NHS 111 in the region over the next 18 months. It is a new single point of access to the NHS when medical care is needed fast but it isn't an emergency and will be available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by calling 111.

County Durham and Darlington have piloted the NHS 111 number and have seen a significant decrease in A&E attendances and patient satisfaction with the service has been very high.

A regional procurement exercise is in place which will result in a contract with a single provider for the service across the region.

During the next 18 months across the North of Tyne, South of Tyne and Wear and Teesside there will be a significant amount of engagement with GP practices, local providers of health and social care and local community groups to ensure high levels of awareness about the new service.

This engagement will inform a public information campaign about the new services which will be launched prior to the implementation of NHS 111.

It is expected that 111 will be implemented in Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland in April 2013.

Any Qualified Provider

Feedback about this initiative has been discussion at a meeting of representatives of local LINKs during September. Views have also been sought from a range of key stakeholders, including clinical commissioning groups and health and wellbeing boards.

The decision about which three services should be taken forward has not yet been finalised, but will be confirmed by the end of October. At that point we will write to each LINK advising the AQP priorities for North of Tyne.

In terms of next steps, from now until the end of November 2011, work is being undertaken nationally to develop all the documentation required to support each service procurement. A phased procurement process will commence in the new year with the aim of ensuring that three AQP services are in place by September 2012.

It's important to note AQP is just one way in which we try and make service improvements (especially where we receive feedback about them) and also that this is the first stage in AQP. Services not chosen this time around could be taken forward next year where there are choice, access and quality issues. Due to the tight timescales for implementation, where there are significant implications for existing contracts, further detailed work may be required before an AQP procurement is taken forward.

Be clear on cancer

A major drive is taking place across the North East and North Cumbria to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer and encourage people to go to their GPs at the earliest opportunity to give them the best chance of successful treatment. NHS North of Tyne is coordinating this work on behalf of the North of England Cancer Network (NECN) and the campaign is known as Be Clear on Cancer.

During September and October a team has been visiting shopping centres across the North East raising awareness of the early signs and symptoms of cancer and recruit to a patient and carer involvement network which will be engaged with to inform the way cancer services are provided. The aim is to recruit 400 members of the public across the region to the involvement network. Early indications show that the recruitment drive has been very successful with over 150 people signed up to the network within the first two weeks of the road show.

Winter flu vaccine

NHS North of Tyne has been working closely with GP practices across Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland and the strategic health authority – NHS North East – to ensure everyone at risk from flu gets vaccinated.

The vaccine is available free to all pregnant women, anyone aged 65 years or over and anyone who has a long term health problem.

In addition to writing out directly to patients eligible for the vaccine an NHS 'flu fighter squad' has been traveling the North East spreading the message about the flu jab and answering any questions members of the public have about the vaccine. Vaccinations began in earnest from October 10 and early indications show uptake has been good.

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