

Report to Cabinet

Title:	Select Committee Inquiry Report into GP Services
Date:	8 December 2014
Date can be implemented:	n/a
Author:	The Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee (Lin Hazell – Chairman)
Contact officer:	James Povey – Scrutiny Policy Officer (01296 382401)
Local members affected:	All
Portfolio areas affected:	n/a

For press enquiries concerning this report, please contact the media office on 01296 382444

Summary

In response to concerns over appointment waiting times and access, and variable patient experience satisfaction scores between local practices, the Buckinghamshire County Council Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee undertook this inquiry into local GP service provision.

The focus of the inquiry was not on the quality of care, but we were reassured by the evidence we saw on this and the oversight regime in place to monitor and address any failings. Our focus was instead on the variation in patient experience, and understanding some of the factors behind this and pressures on services.

The inquiry group considered evidence from a range of sources including patient feedback received by the committee and from secondary sources, evidence sessions with GP Service commissioners, representatives and regulators, and via visits to 12 GP practices across the county where we spoke with practice staff.

We have found evidence of an imbalance between capacity and demand on GP services locally, but this is certainly not confined to Buckinghamshire. Capacity is constrained by service funding levels and premises, but most critically by staff recruitment and retention issues which is not straightforward to address. Service demand has undoubtedly increased in



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the last 10 years, and whilst we recommend more to be done on demand management, demand is only likely to be fully met by the more radical changes to the model of service delivery being called for nationally.

Waiting times for appointments, and how appointment administration is managed, are particular areas of patient experience concern. Whilst this is closely linked to capacity and demand issues, we feel there should be closer monitoring of waiting time variation for non-urgent appointments, given urgent needs seem to be being met. Patient Participation Groups have an important role in identifying patient experience issues, and we have recommended that steps be taken to ensure these function effectively in every practice.

GP premises investment is deficient locally and nationally. Whilst some facilitation for this will happen nationally, it is for local commissioners and providers to ensure they are sufficiently organised and forward thinking in how opportunities via developer contributions and newly commissioned primary care services are grasped to resolve this.

Encouragement is being given for Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to assume greater responsibility for primary care provision. We feel this is positive and a response to shortcomings in the levels of oversight and support for General Practice in the commissioning structure currently. It is important this extra responsibility on CCGs is adequately resourced and supported.

There will potentially be significant change to how General Practice is delivered over the next five years, and we consider it vital that individual GP practices are guided and supported in leading this. It is also vital that patients are effectively engaged at an early stage on these changes.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to note this report, and no response is required. The recommendations within the report will be directed to the NHS England National Team (recommendations 1 and 8), the NHS England Thames Valley Area Team (recommendations 2, 3, 4 and 5), the two local Clinical Commissioning Groups (recommendations 3 and 7), and Healthwatch Bucks (recommendation 6). Responses will be requested within 28 days, and recorded at the next Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee on 10th February 2015.

Background Papers

General Practice: A report by the Buckinghamshire Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.

If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Democratic Services Team by 5 December 2014 5.00pm on 5 December 2014. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 383627 or 383610), Fax (to 01296 382421), or e-mail to cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk