

Proposed changes to Out of Hours Services in South West Essex

1. Introduction

This paper sets out proposals for changes in how GP out-of-hours services are delivered for south west Essex patients by the East of England Ambulance NHS Trust (EEAST). The changes will not affect the quality of patient care, but will allow EEAST to make best use of clinical staff to deliver a high quality out-of-hours service.

All primary care trusts, and NHS providers, are required to meet national targets and priorities which are set annually by the Department of Health. In addition NHS South West Essex plans, through its Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention (QIPP) and Turnaround Plans, to deliver £60m additional productivity savings in 2011/12.

As part of this savings plan, NHS South West Essex has asked the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust to find savings of at least 1.5% of its current annual contract value, which is £2.28M a year. The proposal set out below will deliver a 2% efficiency saving in 2011/12.

The proposal has been supported by the PCT's Clinical Executive Committee, which is made up of representatives from the GP commissioning groups in south west Essex and is chaired by Dr Anil Chopra, local GP and medical director of NHS South West Essex.

2. Background

NHS South West Essex is the primary care trust that commissions – plans, develops and buys – health services for people living in Basildon, Billericay, Brentwood, Wickford and Thurrock. GPs, nurses and commissioners have been working on these proposals since last autumn, and we have been engaging with stakeholders over the past weeks.

NHS South West Essex has 82 GP practices.

34 (41%) GP practices, mainly in the Basildon and Grays areas, have 24 hour responsibility for their patients. These GPs formed their own company South Essex Emergency Doctors Service (SEEDs) to provide care to their patients outside normal GP practice opening hours during the evenings, weekends and on Public Holidays. The proposals in this paper do not affect this service.

48 (58%) GP practices do not provide out of hours services to their patients following changes to the national GP contract in 2004. These GP practices

are responsible for providing primary care services to their patients on Mondays to Fridays from 8am to 6.30pm.

The East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST) provides out of hours services for patients registered with these 48 GP practices during the evening from 6.30pm to 8am the following day and for 24 hours on weekends and on public holidays. The existing contract with EEAST runs until 31 January 2012, following a national tendering process in 2007.

A summary of the total population covered by SEEDS (opted in) and EEAST (opted out) out-of-hours providers is set out below:

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| EEAST patient population | 269,389 (64%) |
| SEEDS patient population | 153,164 (36%) |
| Total SWE patients | 422,553 (100%) |

NHS South West Essex will be working with GP Commissioning Consortia and NHS South East Essex as part of the South Essex PCT cluster to decide how out-of-hours services should be organised in future across South Essex. The views of local people will be sought before any final decision is taken.

3. GP out-of-hours services in south west Essex

GP out-of-hours services provide urgent medical advice or treatment only during the evenings, weekends or on public holidays. The service is not intended to be an alternative to attending a GP surgery for routine care.

All Brentwood GP practices currently offer appointments outside normal opening hours during the evening or on Saturday mornings to their patients through extended hours arrangements commissioned by the PCT.

Patients can access the out-of-hours service by telephoning their usual GP practice. They will either be automatically diverted to the out-of-hours service or given the out-of-hours service telephone number on the surgery answerphone message.

All out-of-hours telephone calls are recorded and logged. All emergency or life threatening calls are immediately transferred to the ambulance 999 service.

All other calls are passed to an on-call GP who will ring the patient back and advise whether the patient requires: telephone advice; referral to hospital; or whether they need to be seen by a GP

Patients who need to see a doctor will be given an appointment time and asked to travel to a primary care centre in south west Essex. There are currently three centres.

Patients will only be offered a home visit when their illness prevents them from travelling to a primary care centre.

The primary care centres (PCCs) are currently based at the following locations:

- Basildon University Hospital,, Nether Mayne Basildon
- Thurrock Community Hospital, Long Lane, Grays
- Brentwood Community Hospital, Crescent Drive, Brentwood

Opening times are as follows:

Basildon and Grays: 6.30pm – 8am Mondays – Fridays and open 24 hours at weekends and Public Holidays

Brentwood: Mondays to Fridays: 6.30- 11pm and 8am-11pm at weekends and on Public Holidays

4. Current out-of-hours activity

The East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST) received 36,562 out of hours calls in 2010. By comparison SEEDs received 19,484 calls in 2010.

A summary of the types of calls to EEAST is set out below.

| Type of Call | Number of Calls in 2010 |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 999 life threatening emergencies | 272 (0.7%) |
| Ambulance referral after GP triage | 535 (1.5%) |
| Telephone advice only | 16040 (44%) |
| GP/ECP Consultation at Primary Care Centre | 16535 (45%) |
| GP/ECP Home Visit | 2933 (8%) |
| Referred to Out of Hours District Nursing Service | 247 (0.7%) |
| Total Calls | 36,562 |

National benchmarking of out-of-hours services by the Primary Care Foundation in 2009/10 showed that EEAST has a lower than average number

of telephone advice calls and home visits compared to other out-of-hours providers.

The survey also showed that the number of people using the EEAST out-of-hours services is in line with other out-of-hours providers across the country.

The cost of the EEAST service is below the national average for out-of-hours providers. This means that the productivity of the service compares well with other out-of-hours services.

Both EEAST and SEEDs perform consistently well against National Quality Standards which measure the time taken to respond to patients for emergency, urgent and less urgent out-of-hours calls.

Patient satisfaction with the EEAST service was considered to be comparable with other out-of-hours providers in the 2009/10 WHAT national survey.

5. What are the changes proposed by EEAST?

EEAST has been in discussion with NHS South West Essex. We are proposing delivery of the required cost efficiency savings while maintaining a high quality of care to patients by reducing the opening times at the Brentwood Primary Care Centre (PCC) at Brentwood Community Hospital in Crescent Drive.

The Brentwood Primary Care Centre is currently open on Mondays to Fridays from 6.30pm to 11pm and from 8am to 11pm on weekends and Public Holidays.

A review of the number of patients attending the Brentwood PCC during 2010 showed that, on average during the week, five patients are seen at the Brentwood PCC in an evening, compared to an average of 39 patients at weekends and 120 patients on Public Holidays.

A summary of the number of out-of-hours calls for each of the three primary care centres is provided in Appendix A to this paper.

It is proposed that the service normally provided at Brentwood PCC on weekday evenings is re-directed. This will ensure the doctors on shift throughout the service will be utilised to maximum effect without compromising patient care. Patients living anywhere in south west Essex, including the Brentwood area, will be offered appointments at either the Basildon or Grays Primary Care Centres.

It is recognised that this will mean longer journeys for Brentwood patients if they need to see an out-of-hours GP on a weekday evening.

The distance by road between the Brentwood PCC and the Basildon PCC is 10.4 miles. The distance by road between the Brentwood and Grays PCCs is 14 miles.

The Brentwood PCC will continue to open from 8am to 11pm on weekends and on Public Holidays when there is higher demand for Out of Hours care from Brentwood residents.

Patients living in the Brentwood area who are unable to travel owing to their illness will continue to be offered a home visit from a GP or Emergency Care Practitioner (ECP).

This proposal will release savings of £57,000 a year.

6. Comments from stakeholders

If you have any views on the above proposal, we would be pleased to hear from you. We would also like to know if you have ideas on how we can find additional savings from local out-of-hours services.

Please send your comments to:

Carolyn Larsen
Associate Director – Primary Care Commissioning
NHS SW Essex, Phoenix Court, Christopher Martin Road, Basildon, Essex,
SS14 3HG
Email: Carolyn.larsen@swessex.nhs.uk
Telephone: 01268 245703 or Fax: 01268 245701
Closing date for comments: **30 April 2011**

7. Reference:

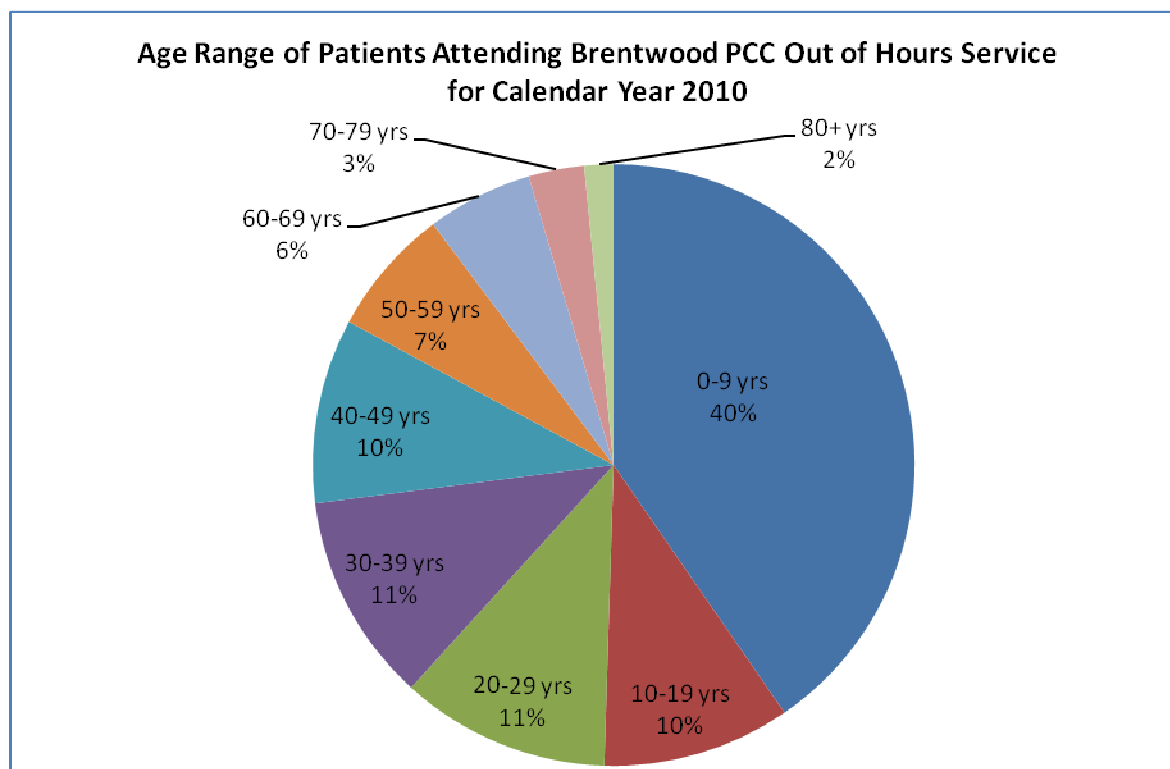
Primary Care Foundation Benchmarking of Out of Hours Services Report
November 2009 (www.primarycarefoundation.co.uk)

Appendix A

Total Number of PCC Visits in 2010

| | Brentwood PCC | | Thurrock PCC | | Basildon PCC | |
|---------------|----------------|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| | Total for 2010 | Average No. of patients per day | Total for 2010 | Average No. of patients per day | Total for 2010 | Average No. of patients per day |
| Bank Holidays | 961 | 120 | 777 | 97 | 760 | 95 |
| Weekends | 4,009 | 39 | 2,714 | 26 | 2,404 | 23 |
| Weekdays | 1,163 | 5 | 1,869 | 7 | 1,885 | 7 |
| Total | 6,133 | 17 | 5,360 | 15 | 5,049 | 14 |

Average based on number of patients who attended the PCC to see an OOH GP as a proportion of the number of bank holidays, weekends or weekday evenings during 2010.



34% of patients attending Brentwood PCC for 2010 were between 0-4 years old