

Response by Primary Care Trust – Commissioning

In response to request to provide information as to how the Health Community responded to the severe weather conditions in 2009, the following is meant as an overview to assist the Committee in its discussion on the 21st May.

What went well

- Emergency planning in the County, with agencies co-operating in twice daily telephone conference calls to update all on operational problems and particular challenges, with joint work where necessary to resolve. It was also connected with the Health Service providing updates to NHS West Midlands to gather intelligence about the wider West Midlands picture of winter pressures.
- NHS staff commitment to maintain services with increased co-operation and planning to assist the cover arrangements.
- Volunteer Land rover / 4x4 arrangements, that enabled access for hard to reach clients in the Community.
- Bed management arrangements in the County, to transfer patients between from the Acute Hospital to Community Hospital sites to “free up” much needed acute bed provision.
- From the 17th December, NHS Herefordshire commissioned an additional walk in facility at the Asda Centre to help/assist the level of primary care provision within Hereford City. From small weekly attendances at the beginning, the service has now expanded to treat approximately 470 residents per week.
- From October to March NHS Herefordshire commissioned additional medical support for the Hereford County A&E department with a GP in A&E. GPs were, therefore, recruited to supplement and support the A&E department in their busiest periods during the week (Friday through to Sunday pm) with the intent of discharging the majority of patients with Primary Care conditions or minor ailments, plus reducing the level of non elective admissions wherever feasible. This GP support was in addition to the existing medical staff in Hereford County Hospital.

What did not go well

- Demand for acute care, in excess of normal winter pressures/expectations and the consequence, (e.g. impact upon elective care / cancelled operations. Similar experiences in other Health Communities though and increasing number of minor accidents requiring treatment.

What improvements you think could be made.

- Wider public information on alternative services/provision during the winter period to offset some of the undoubted pressure experienced from acute care

(e.g. diversions from A&E to alternative provision inc. pharmacists and GP surgeries).

What relevant policies are in place

- Continuity of service plans within NHS Herefordshire and GP/Out of hours services.
- Bed escalation procedures – on call senior staff to assist on the planning of care outside of normal office hours including bank holidays and weekends.

Whether any reviews had already been undertaken – review of Command and Control arrangements in Health and feedback to staff thanking for their continued cooperation and support at a time of severe pressure.

Any other observations you consider the needs to take into account. The emergency planning function across both NHS Herefordshire and Herefordshire Council operated effectively to coordinate action and ensure all agencies were proactively engaged (silver command) to oversee the Herefordshire services at a time of severe pressure and adverse weather conditions.

13th May 2010