



Health Select Committee
14 March 2013

Non-Emergency Patient Transport – Centralised Booking Service

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services

The Select Committee is examining the patient transport service, looking at its operation since contract start (1 October 2012). This report details the centralised call booking service, provided by SCC on behalf of NHS Surrey.

Introduction and background

1. In 2010/11, the Health and Social Care Bill (now enacted) promoted a multi-agency approach to social care and health services provision. At the same time, the Public Value Review of SCC's Transport Co-ordination Centre (TCC) advocated the benefits from joint working with NHS Surrey. Patient user groups had also expressed concerns with the former service provision.
2. The former patient transport contract ended on 30 September 2012 and, having reviewed the service, Surrey PCT decided to split out the eligibility assessment and journey booking element of the service from the transport provision element. The PCT invited SCC to deliver a centralised booking service on their behalf (and funded by them); and the service commenced 1 October 2012.

What is the service provided by SCC?

3. The SCC centralised booking service (CBS) is for Surrey residents registered with a Surrey GP requiring transport to and from home to attend outpatient appointments. The service operates Monday to Friday 8am to 6 pm currently. The CBS provides a "one stop shop" for patients dealing with:
 - The eligibility assessment
 - The booking of patient transport, if eligible
 - Signposting to alternative transport solutions, if not eligible

4. The CBS assesses a patient's eligibility for transport against the South East Coast wide eligibility criteria, which state that only patients with a genuine medical need that prevents them from travelling by public transport, community transport, taxi or private vehicle are entitled to NHS funded patient transport.
5. If eligible, the CBS will book transport for a patient's planned outpatient appointments up to 5pm of the day prior to an appointment (on the day transport must be booked direct with the transport provider – South East Coast Ambulance).
6. For patients that are not eligible, the CBS will offer alternative suggestions for making the journey; for example, providing information on public transport routes and community or voluntary schemes that may operate in their area.

Service Activity and Contract Monitoring

7. The CBS currently handles around 500-600 calls per week. The service was originally set up to book transport for first appointments only, but a decision has been made that the CBS should take all planned appointment bookings from 4 March 2013, so the volume of calls is expected to rise.
8. NHS Surrey has recently appointed a Contracts Manager for the CBS and South East Coast Ambulance contracts. A number of KPIs are being developed that will be used for monitoring performance. Monthly contract review meetings have also been put in place.

Issues

9. There are good working relationships with South East Coast Ambulance (SECAMB) and NHS Surrey, with a shared commitment to high quality, cost effective service provision. There have been concerns expressed previously at the lack of resource NHS Surrey has put into the project, and consequently slow progress has been made on certain issues, including contract sign off. However, the resource issue is now resolved with the appointment of a Contracts Manager, and significant progress has been made in the weeks since her appointment. The CBS specification is now close to agreement and it is expected the contract will be signed within the next few weeks.

Next Steps

Permanent CBS Team

10. The intention is to recruit a full permanent team as soon as a final structure is agreed with NHS Surrey. The number of staff employed will largely depend on projected call activity, agreed expansion of service scope and the level of service expected from NHS Surrey e.g. in respect to call answering times etc.

Further Development

11. Further IT development is planned jointly with NHS Surrey and SECAMB to provide a new front-end to the booking system to allow the capture of the outcomes of the eligibility assessments, for example.
12. The scope of service for the CBS may be expanded if further PCTs wish to use the service. Any such expansion would be subject to a separate contract with each PCT.
13. NHS Surrey, SCC and SECAMB are currently working with patient user groups to review how the eligibility of patients should be assessed, to make the process effective, fair and transparent.

Department for Transport

14. The Department for Transport has expressed interest in the partnership working on this project and has indicated a possible ministerial visit in that respect.

Financial and value for money implications

15. None

Equalities Implications

16. A key aim of the CBS is to deliver a service that is fair and personalised, providing equitable access to the patient transport service for eligible patients.

Risk Management Implications

17. None

Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy

18. This project helps deliver the Council's commitment to strategic partnership working.

Recommendations:

19. This report is for information only.

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Sources/background papers: not applicable

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