

**Minutes of the Health Scrutiny Committee meeting held on
14 March 2013**

16/13 PATIENT TRANSPORT SERVICES [Item 7]

Declarations of Interest:

None.

Witnesses:

John Furey, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport
Geraint Davies, Director of Corporate Services, SECAMB
Rob Bell, Head of Commercial Services, SECAMB
Tracey Coventry, Transport Co-ordination Team Manager
Marion Heron, Associate Director supporting Transition, NHS Surrey
Carol Pearson, CEO, Surrey Coalition of Disabled People
Cliff Bush, Chair, LINK

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member attended the meeting and gave an update on the contract. He recognised that there had been several issues with the delivery, since the contract had gone live in October 2012. One of these key issues was the transfer of G4S staff into SECAMB, assessing their skills and competence. Many had to be retrained to ensure that they were in line with PTS and SECAMB requirements. The second issue was the age of some of the vehicles. He advised that the new vehicles had not been delivered in time but that they had begun to be rolled out in mid-February 2013. The service is now delivering 18,000 transports a month within Surrey. It was reported that 85% of journeys were on time and that 91% of patients were on the vehicle for less than one hour. There is work currently being done to ensure that the eligibility criteria are clear for all groups and there are plans to roll out the booking solution.
2. The Committee was advised that the contract had still not been signed but that it should be done within the next week, before the end of the financial year. There had been concerns regarding the Director appointed by NHS Surrey but this has now been resolved. The Cabinet Member indicated that Surrey County Council was fortunate to have such a good working relationship with SECAMB that ensured the service was delivered effectively without a contract. He indicated that SECAMB had worked closely with the Transport Coordination Centre to ensure a smooth PTS transition. He continued by saying that it was due to good will on all sides that ensured patients had not suffered and it should be acknowledged and applauded that these groups had worked together well.

3. LINK, providing a patient perspective, stated that the patient experience had not been good; however the various groups have worked together to resolve and take forward a better service for the patient.
4. SECAMB's Head of Commercial Services informed the Committee that they were seeking feedback regarding the patient experience and this will be reported back in due course.
5. Surrey's Transport Co-ordination Team Manager reported that there is a centralised booking service that had initial problems, but these have now been resolved. Patients will soon be able to access one telephone number, which will then have options for the centralised booking service or for SECAMB.
6. The Chief Executive of Surrey Coalition of Disabled People stated that the problems had arisen due to lack of clear direction and this had been disappointing. She indicated that the Cabinet Member and his team have tried to resolve the problems along the way. The Coalition is aware that there is still quite a lot to be sorted; however it looks forward to the future improvements.
7. The LINK Chair stated that it had been frustrating to all concerned. He had wished for it to be noted that some patients were missing their hospital appointments due to late arrival of transport. Obtaining these appointments is difficult and when they are missed, there is often a long wait for a new appointment.
8. NHS Surrey have recognised that there was a lot of learning for the lead individual and were hoping for improved commissioning of services in the future. She personally offered her apologies on behalf of NHS Surrey.
9. The Vice-Chairman queried assurances that there was reliable digital technology in place to ensure that all patients could access the service (i.e. deaf or hard of hearing and visually impaired patients). Witnesses responded that various media, such as SMS text, had been put in place but this can be inappropriate when attempting to answer eligibility criteria questions so other alternatives are being looked at.
10. Members queried the eligibility criteria being finalised. Witnesses responded that these were being looked at and claimed that the eligibility criteria had not changed but the questions being asked had. The service would also assist those that were ineligible by giving out details for alternative transport organisations. Many people wrongly believe they are entitled to patient transport, thinking it is an open service. It is only available to those who have a genuine medical need. The Chair of LINK indicated that there is an outstanding issue about the eligibility of an advocate or chaperone riding with the patient.
11. Members queried whether the databases were sharing information between organisations. Witnesses indicated that information is transferrable and can be easily accessed. They also said that the booking system has been

designed to ensure that any additional information on specific patient needs is in place to inform PTS staff for appropriate action.

12. Members queried when the Committee Chairman or Scrutiny Officer became aware of this issue, concerned about the ability of the Committee to recognise when problems are occurring and act appropriately. The Scrutiny Officer responded that she became aware in October and November 2012 of issues around the age of the vehicles and, with the support of the Chairman, had raised this informally with SECamb. The Vice-Chairman also indicated that she was aware of issues with the SMS number in October 2012 and, with the help of the Scrutiny Officer, had raised this with the Transport Coordination Centre and SECamb.

Recommendations:

1. Officers from Surrey County Council, SECamb and the Surrey Coalition of the Disabled are thanked and commended on the joint working to improve the delivery of this contract;
2. The Committee was concerned that the new PTS contract has not offered the best patient experience to date but welcomes assurances that most problems have now been dealt with and looks forward to a report back in six months by SECamb, Surrey County Council and the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People.

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