

Health Select Committee
18 September 2013

Non-Emergency Patient Transport – Centralised Call 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 provides an update on the centralised call booking service element of the service, provided by Surrey County Council on behalf of East Surrey Clinical Commissioning Group.

Introduction and background

The former non-emergency patient transport contract ended 30 September 2012 and, prior to retendering, NHS Surrey reviewed the service and made the decision to split out the eligibility assessment and journey booking from the transport provision element. NHS Surrey then invited SCC to deliver a centralised call booking service on their behalf (and funded by them); and the service commenced 1 October 2012. The transport provider is South East Coast Ambulance (SECAmb).

The SCC centralised call 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, providing a “one stop shop” for patients, dealing with:

- Their eligibility assessment
- The booking of patient transport, if eligible
- Signposting to alternative transport solutions, if not eligible

Whilst the service was originally commissioned by NHS Surrey, following changes in the NHS arising from the Health and Social Care Act 2012, responsibility for NHS services passed to Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) on 1 April 2013; and East Surrey CCG was identified as the lead CCG for PTS.

Service Activity and Contract Monitoring

NHS Surrey appointed Surrey and Sussex Commissioning Support Unit (CSU) to contract manage the PTS contracts. The service specification and contract sign-off were treated as a priority by the new Contract Manager, and the contract was sealed by all parties on 12 June 2013.

The CBS service was originally set up to book transport for first appointments only, and handled around 500-600 calls per week. To improve the service for residents, the joint decision was taken for the CBS to take all planned appointment bookings, and this has been done since March 2013. The number of calls handled per month has now risen to between 3500 and 4000 per month.

Monthly contract meetings are held with the Contracts Manager to review performance against the agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The KPIs and current performance are:

KPI	Performance (August 2013)
(1) 90% of calls to be answered within 60 seconds	60%
(2) 100% of calls to be answered within 120 seconds	100% (based on Average Speed of Answer of 93 seconds)
(3) 90% of identified patient group bookings rung back to confirm	Ring-backs currently not possible
(4) 100% of complaints to be responded to and action plans developed within 25 working days	None received

The telephone performance statistics system reports against the first KPI, which has not yet been met, but the percentage is increasing as the team becomes more familiar with processes and the booking system. However, the small team (of 4 staff) limits the ability to some extent to respond to peaks in demand, and further improvement in call answering response times will largely depend on booking system improvements that will speed up the process and consequently increase the team's capacity (see Service Development section below). In addition, failures of either the telephone contact centre system and/or the e-booking system can have a significant effect on the monthly performance statistics.

Performance against the second KPI is 100%, but based purely on the average speed of answer for all calls handled. A method for calculating this more accurately is currently being looked at.

The third KPI is not currently reported on as there is no system in place to identify the patients that should be rung back to confirm their booking details. SECamb are currently working on a report to list these patients.

East Surrey CCG has now appointed NHS South London Commissioning Support Unit to undertake the contract management of PTS, commencing 1 October 2013. Details of any changes to the monitoring arrangements and the new Contract Manager are not yet known.

Issues

The good working relationship with SECAMB and NHS Surrey has continued. The concern about the NHS lack of project resource, detailed in the previous March report, was rectified with the appointment of a Contract Manager. It is hoped that an equally good relationship is maintained with the new Contract Manager.

There are some IT-related issues. The CBS accesses SECAMB's e-booking system (via the internet) to book patient journeys, but slow progress is being made by SECAMB's IT provider in providing access to reports (for patient ring-backs) and rectifying identified system differences between that used by SCC and by SECAMB's staff. This is having an impact on the CBS's ability to provide a fully effective service. In addition, when SCC's internet is down, there is no access to either SCC's contact centre system or SECAMB's booking system, though this is a relatively rare occurrence.

Service Developments

Developments already in place

As mentioned above, the CBS now books transport for all outpatient appointments, which does make the process simpler for eligible patients.

The CBS signposts those patients who are not eligible for patient transport to alternative means of transport, such as community transport, voluntary car schemes and public transport routes. A significant piece of work has been undertaken within the Transport Projects Team to update and add to the voluntary and community transport data available. This means we now have the most comprehensive information on alternative transport options across Surrey, aiming to help, as best as possible, those patients not entitled to PTS.

Further Development

When the ring-back element of the service commences, this should further enhance the service for both patients and SECAMB, by acting as a reminder to patients and helping reduce the number of aborted journeys.

The eligibility assessment is being jointly reviewed by key stakeholders to simplify and streamline the process. In addition, further IT development is underway for SECAMB to provide a new front-end to the booking system to allow the capture of the outcomes of the eligibility assessments, including the streamlined assessment process once agreed. This should speed up the amount of time it takes to complete the eligibility assessment and therefore should increase the CBS's capacity to answer calls.

A major service enhancement is the jointly planned single point of access for patients. Currently, there are 2 different 0300 numbers in use, depending on whether the enquiry is regarding future journeys (CBS) or is an on the day enquiry (SECAMB). The proposal is for one single number, with calls directed to either the CBS or SECAMB, depending on the option chosen by the caller. This single number is to be tested through September/October to assess the

accuracy of call forwarding and of cost reporting. Dependent on the outcome of the testing period, the new single point of access should go live before the end of the year.

Financial and value for money implications

None

Equalities Implications

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

None

Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy

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

Recommendations:

This report is for information only.

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Sources/background papers: not applicable