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| To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE     | Subject: NHS LANARKSHIRE:<br>CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS<br>FOR LANARKSHIRE PRIMARY<br>CARE OUT OF HOURS SERVICE |  |
| From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK |  |  |
| Date: 20 MAY 2004             | Ref: JD/SM   |  |

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report advises Committee of the consultation paper that was issued by NHS Lanarkshire in January 2004 in respect of the current review and redesign of primary care out of hours service; and seeks homologation of the response attached at Appendix 1.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. General Practitioners have provided out of hours services since 1948. However, the new contract for General Practitioners permits them to opt out of providing these services. From December 2004 NHS Lanarkshire are required to make alternative arrangements.
- 2.2. The out of hours services are those provided during the period outwith normal GP surgery opening times and includes nights, weekends and public holidays. The out of hours service is for individuals who require urgent medical care on an unplanned basis and are unable to wait until their GP surgery is open. Out of hours services are quite separate from the care required by individuals in emergency situations when they would dial 999 or visit hospital accident and emergency department – these will not change.
- 2.3. A public consultation document was issued by NHS Lanarkshire in January 2004 for public consultation on the proposed changes to out of hours services. Responses are required by 30 April 2004. Two newsletters have been also been widely circulated. The full document contains a number of potential options.

## 3. PROPOSED CHANGES TO LANARKSHIRE PRIMARY CARE OUT OF HOURS SERVICE

- 3.1. The central element of the proposed changes is the creation of Primary Care out of hours centres at accident and emergency departments in each of the three acute hospital sites in Lanarkshire. One option is to reduce the number of sites to one between midnight and 8 a.m. Transport would be provided in certain circumstances and it is stated that no one should live more than 40 minutes travel time away from a centre. Home visits would continue to take place where deemed necessary. The proposals are accompanied by the planned introduction of NHS24 telephone helpline service to Lanarkshire in the autumn.

3.2. The proposed changes are likely to have a significant impact on the citizens of North Lanarkshire. The Council's response requires to reflect the issues that arise, with particular regard to:

- ◆ Accessibility of service
- ◆ Sustained or improved level of quality and availability
- ◆ Provision of information

3.3. The Council's response highlights:

- ◆ That services must achieve equity of access to all residents of North Lanarkshire
- ◆ That there should be an additional out of hours service located in Cumbernauld
- ◆ That the same number of centres should be available between midnight and 8 a.m. as at any other time
- ◆ That it is necessary for NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Greater Glasgow to reach agreement for people who wish to use services provided by another Health Board.

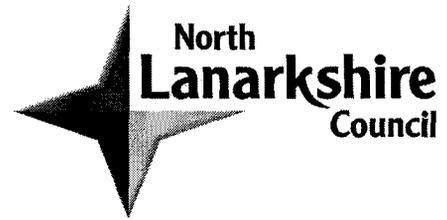
#### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Committee is asked to:

- (i) Homologate the response attached at Appendix 1; and
- (ii) Otherwise note the contents of this report.

  
**Jim Dickie**  
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28 April 2004

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## **North Lanarkshire Council Response to NHS Lanarkshire re: Proposals for Lanarkshire Primary Care Out of Hours Service**

North Lanarkshire Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on consultation proposals by NHS Lanarkshire on Primary Care Out of Hours services.

This response has been prepared on the basis of the full consultation document and two newsletters, "Health News", that were issued in January and April 2004 on this matter. It is understood that the responses received in the course of the consultation period will be considered by the Lanarkshire NHS Board meeting in May 2004.

There are indications from representatives of local communities who participated in meetings on the plans, that there is a lack of full public awareness of all the proposed options. Whilst these are set out in the full document neither newsletter is explicit on this matter. It will be important for all the implications of planned changes to be placed in the public domain.

The Council recognises that the existing arrangements for the provision of out of hours general medical services do require to be reviewed both in the context of the implementation of the new contract for general practitioners as well as an outstanding requirement to modernise and improve existing service delivery.

The basis of the Council's response covers three main areas:

- ◆ Accessibility of service
- ◆ Sustained or improved level of quality and availability
- ◆ Provision of information

### **Accessibility of Service**

As has been made very clear during the course of some of the consultation events within the area, there is serious concern about the accessibility of services to residents residing in some parts of North Lanarkshire. The Council clearly wishes to satisfy itself that the proposals will achieve equity of access for all its citizens, including the provision of appropriate transport where required.

The proposal to have three centres in Lanarkshire based at District General Hospitals presents particular issues of access not just for those living in more rural locations but also for residents in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth area. It is considered inappropriate and unacceptable that there are no plans for Cumbernauld, the largest town in North Lanarkshire, to have an Out of Hours Care centre.

**The Council does not support this position and calls upon NHS Lanarkshire to make suitable local Out of Hours provision in Cumbernauld.**

Furthermore one of the options being considered is that the three proposed centres reduce to one between the hours of midnight and 8 a.m. This would only serve to exacerbate problems of access and would not be supported by Council. It would also appear to contradict NHS Lanarkshire's own position, namely that centres should be within 40 minutes access for everyone.

**The Council's considers it essential that the number of centres available between midnight and 8 a.m. should be the same as at any other times i.e. one at each District General Hospital and an additional site in Cumbernauld.**

There are a number of issues that the Council wish to raise with regard to residents in North Lanarkshire having good access to the proposed service:

- For those individuals who do not have or cannot make use of their own transport, further information is required in respect of what transport will be made available and how quickly will this transport will be made available?
- Does the principle that "Patients should be no more than 40 minutes drive to the nearest centre" include the time that it will take for transport to be arranged following the initial 'phone call to NHS 24, to arriving at the house and driving to the centre?
- What arrangements that will be made for families where carer support will be required in the household should the main carer have to leave to attend the Primary Care Centre?
- Will NHS Lanarkshire provide "escorts" for individuals who may be so unwell that travelling unaccompanied would pose potential risk (e.g. those with severe dementia or functional mental ill health)?
- What arrangements will be made for those individuals who are requested to attend a Primary Care Centre other than the one most local to them because of the level of demand on that centre?

It is essential to recognise that whilst many Social Work services operate out of hours this is, in the overwhelming majority of instances, planned care. There is very limited capacity to provide unplanned care as suggested by the April newsletter. The Council welcomes future dialogue with NHS Lanarkshire about more flexible out of hours support arrangements that could, for example, prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital. However in the context of this consultation that remains, for the most part, an aspiration rather than a reality at present.

Finally, it is necessary to respond to the healthcare needs of those residents of North Lanarkshire who live within NHS Lanarkshire's catchment but elect to use services provided by NHS Greater Glasgow.

**The Council considers it imperative that there is agreement across both Health bodies to facilitate this arrangement.**

### **Sustained Quality and Availability of Service**

With regard to quality, North Lanarkshire Council welcomes the approach being taken by NHS Lanarkshire to ensure that the new service will provide care to national standards and protocols in order to ensure consistency of approach.

In respect of availability of appropriate service, the Council is concerned that North Lanarkshire residents will experience no reduction in availability of service – indeed by introducing consistency of approach, it is hoped that all areas will have equal access to good quality services. However it is very difficult to draw informed conclusions from the material provided in the full consultation document.

Whilst the total current demand for services is shown on Pages 6-7, the only detailed information provided on service use appears to relate solely to East Kilbride and Cumbernauld. It is not possible to make meaningful comparisons with other areas and therefore to comment, with confidence, on the projected demand estimated for the three proposed centres (Page 19). Nonetheless the projected demand for Monklands appears to be underestimated given current use across the geographical catchment it is planned to cover.

The suggestion that residents in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth "wait until after midnight to phone in order to get a home visit" in contrast to other areas of Lanarkshire is subjective and unhelpful. If such a statement is to be made in a public document (which itself is highly questionable), then it requires to be backed up by significantly greater analysis than is made available in the report.

**The Council seek assurances that the proposals will not result in any reduction of quality in existing areas of good practice and that the projected demand for service is based on a robust analysis of the information available.**

### **Provision of information**

As stated earlier, not all those who have participated in the consultation process are necessarily clear about the range of options set out by NHS Lanarkshire or the implications of proposed changes.

It is recognised that NHS Lanarkshire has attempted, through the provision of their newsletters in particular, to communicate publicly on this matter. Not only will it be crucial that North Lanarkshire residents are aware of the new services that is being developed and how to access them, they must also be made fully aware that they have the same access to accident and emergency services as was previously the case.

**The Council seek assurances that there will be comprehensive public communication on future changes following the consultation process.**

## **Conclusion**

Whilst North Lanarkshire Council recognises the requirement for NHS Lanarkshire to develop and modernise their Primary Care Out of Hours service, a number of real concerns and issues have been highlighted in this paper.

The proposed changes are likely to have a significant impact on the citizens of North Lanarkshire. The Council calls upon NHS Lanarkshire to reflect the views of the Council, as set out in this response, in the design of Out of Hours services.