

SPECIAL REPORT ON OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: THE FUTURE OF PRIMARY CARE IN READING

We were delighted to welcome around 35 members of our local community to our annual general meeting (AGM) on 21st July. This year we decided to do things a little differently, by having a panel of speakers related to our main project for 2015-2016: people's experience of primary care in Reading.

For most of us, visits to our GP surgery are our main contact with the NHS - there are 340m consultations carried out each year in the UK and 90 per cent of people's NHS contact is with primary care. At our AGM, team manager Rebecca Norris presented highlights from our project, which involved visits to 31 GP surgeries in Reading to get a snapshot of patient experience at each site. When we pooled the findings from the 595 people we spoke to, we found that:



- More than 8 in 10 people are happy with the quality of care they receive;
- Most people booked appointments by telephone - only 7% said they booked online
- People were generally okay with their surgery's opening hours but there is a variation across Reading: six surgeries said they did not open at all on a Saturday and we think more needs to be done to ensure working people have access to more convenient appointment times, regardless of where they live in Reading;
- One-quarter of people did not always see the doctor or nurse of their choice and this was a concern for many people who value the trusted relationship they build up with clinicians.

While we carried out our project, there was a lot of national and local discussion about shortages of GPs. We know some Reading surgeries heavily rely on locums (temporary doctors), and this affects patients who might feel frustrated at having to 'tell their story' again to an unfamiliar clinician.

One of the solutions proposed to deal with GP shortages is using the skills of other primary care physicians to take up some of the less complex workload of GPs. During our project work, we learnt that some of these professionals are being employed in Reading surgeries. They came to our AGM to help explain their role to the public - turn over to find out more.





Kim Frewin, a nurse prescriber based at Pembroke Surgery (pictured left) explained to the AGM audience, that she not only carries out normal practice nurse tasks, but also carries out telephone triage of patients, and can see and prescribe for patients with acute and chronic diseases.

She will also see female patients who have requested to see a female clinician, if a female doctor is unavailable.

When asked by a member of the audience, she said she believed as a nurse prescriber, she could carry out 'a good chunk' of a GP's workload.

The main point Kim wanted to stress was that while independent nurse prescribers can technically prescribe anything from the British National Formulary (the full list of UK medications), nurse prescribers are trained to only prescribe within their field of expertise

So for example, a hospital nurse prescriber specialising in caring for patients with one specific disease, would probably not be able to walk into a GP surgery and confidently prescribe for the wide range of conditions that patients present with in primary care.

Next we heard from Ida Osei (pictured right), who works as a prescribing pharmacist seeing patients at Tilehurst Surgery. Ida had previously worked in London, carrying out asthma reviews of patients and had decided she wanted to develop that further to work more directly with patients.

Ida does a mixture of work at Tilehurst. She might review patients' prescriptions, speak to patients on the telephone to see whether they need to come into the surgery, or run consultations with patients.

She says patients can't be forced to see her, but if they do ring up seeking a GP but are offered an appointment with her instead, the advantage is that her appointments are 20 minutes long.

Legally, Ida says she can prescribe anything to patients, except certain controlled drugs.

'A minority of patients might think, 'Am I being fobbed off? But if you deliver - by listening to patients, taking a full history and agreeing a plan with them - people learn about your role and start to accept you. I introduce myself as Ida, the practice pharmacist. You must be transparent and explain who you are and when you have to go and check with a doctor if you are unsure on any points.'





Lastly we heard from Dr Simone McGee (pictured left), academic director of the physician associate (PA) programme at the University of Reading, which is training a variety of professionals to work as PAs across the NHS.

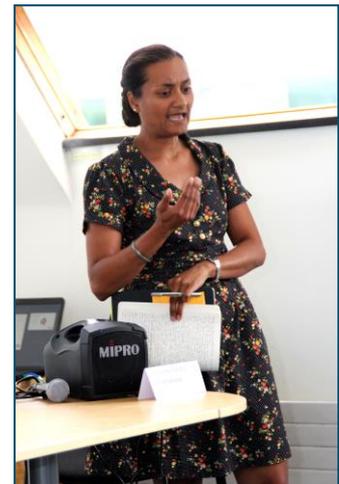
The PA role originated in the United States and is now growing in the UK.

Simone, a former Reading GP, said anyone wanting to become a physician's associate, must be a post-graduate. Most of the current students had a life sciences degree and had backgrounds such as being paramedics or clinical psychologists. The students undergo a two-year course of 45 weeks per year - essentially a three-year course into two years. The students are trained in the 'medical model', to think the same way as a doctor in terms of taking a history from a patient, and coming up with a management plan

with the patient. Students also have to gain practical experience, and have spent time at Reading surgeries such as Western Elms Surgery and University Health Centre. This summer, 15 students will qualify and a further 18 will start the course in September.

The biggest stumbling block for PAs is that currently, they cannot legally prescribe, although they can suggest prescriptions for GPs to sign off. New legislation is anticipated to change this. Overall, Simone thought a PA could take up to 50 per cent of a GP's workload, leaving GPs to concentrate on more complex patients who have several serious conditions

The meeting also heard from our chief executive Mandeep Kaur Sira (pictured right), who emphasised how much local people trusted our organisation to give them information, advice or advocacy for NHS complaints or social care planning. We have now been running for more than three years and in 2016-17 we are dealing with a 15 per cent budget cut. Despite this, we will keep working hard for local people, Mandeep said.



More information about new roles in primary care:

Who are physician associates? A leaflet from the Royal College of Physicians' Faculty of Physician Associates. Find it at: <http://bit.ly/2aJYeAK>

RCN Fact Sheet Nurse Prescribing in the UK. An information guide produced by the Royal College of Nursing. Find it at: <http://bit.ly/2awKFkJ>

RCGP and RPS Policy Statement on GP Practice Based Pharmacists, from the Royal College of GPs and Royal Pharmaceutical Society Find it at: <http://bit.ly/2auKnO4>



UNPAID CARERS OFFERED PACKAGE OF ONLINE INFO & ADVICE

Reading people who provide unpaid care for relatives or friends are being offered information and advice through new online guides.

The digital resources are available from a single website and cover topics such as how to find support if you are new to a caring role; your rights to any financial or practical help; and an e-learning course on good nutrition for yourself and the person you are looking after. Reading



Borough Council has teamed up with the national charity Carers UK to provide these resources to local carers. Go to the council

webpage <http://bit.ly/2aZIGXc> to find out how to create an account and get free access to all the resources.

WHAT IS AN 'UNPAID CARER'?

There are more than 12,000 'unpaid carers' in Reading.

They are adults or children who provide unpaid support to a partner, relative or friend who couldn't manage to live independently or whose health or wellbeing would deteriorate without this help. This could be due to frailty, disability or serious health condition, mental ill health or substance misuse.

Unpaid carers have certain rights. Call the Reading and West Berkshire Carers Hub to find out more on 0118 324 7333.

COUNCIL SEEKS VIEWS ON 'RECOVERY COLLEGE' FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Reading Borough Council is asking people to complete a survey about its proposals to create a 'recovery college' to support people with mental health issues.

The idea of the college is to help people gain new skills through a variety of courses to help them live more fulfilling lives. The courses would be co-designed and co-delivered by people with mental health issues and by mental health professionals.

The council wants to know what courses people would like on a training programme and when and where they would want those delivered from.

The council says a Reading Recovery College could include a Students Union, where people will be able to find additional social and welfare support. This could also be a place to get help at times of crisis. The Students Union would be a shared area for socialising, for peer support, for sharing information and advice, and building new skills too. The council wants to know what would make the Students Union a meaningful place for people to meet others and find help and support at difficult times.

People can give their views by completing the online survey at www.reading.gov.uk/mhconsultation, any time up to Tuesday 23 August 2016.

If people need a hard copy or other format of the questionnaire, email wellbeing.service@reading.gov.uk or telephone 0118 937 2383.





SEVERE ROUND OF COUNCIL FUNDING CUTS SET TO AFFECT VULNERABLE PEOPLE

A mental health care home in Reading is set to be closed down and support for adults with learning disabilities could change, as part of the latest round of funding cuts agreed by Reading Borough Council (RBC).



More than 100 separate funding cuts, amounting to nearly £20m, are planned to take place across all council departments between now and 2020. The policy

committee of RBC agreed on 18 July to back the proposals 'with regret', said council leader Jo Lovelock. "These are the latest in a long line of savings we are having to consider following the unprecedented cuts in Government funding," she added.

The plans include:

- Closing Focus House care home in Castle Street, which currently supports up to seven people with mental illness to return to independent living. The home was rated 'good' by the Care Quality Commission in 2015. Service users would be moved 'to more suitable community based provision', the council plans say: **£318,000 cut**
- Reviews of care packages for adults with learning disabilities, that 'may result in service users moving from supported living to not requiring a service': **£585,000 cut**
- 'Potentially' reducing current care packages of adults who need lifelong support with physical needs and 'supporting' new clients 'to remain in

their own homes where possible': **£68,000 cut**

- 'Potentially' reducing care packages for adults with sensory disabilities: **£16,000 cut**
- Staffing 'restructure' across all adult social services teams. (Around 200 jobs are set to go across the whole council by 2020): **£425,000 cut**
- Overhaul of fostering and adoption services including changes to fees paid to foster carers, and possibly moving children to lower cost placements: **£1,982,200 cut**
- Reduce voluntary sector contracts that support children and families: **£121,000 cut**
- 'Reshape of council customer services and a move to online and 'self-service': **£490,000 cut**
- Close some public toilets: **£30,000 cut**
- Changing concessionary bus pass entitlements: changing the start time from 9am to 9.30am and removing acceptance of the pass on football and rugby buses to and from the Madejski Stadium: **£59,000 cut**

No stone has been left unturned by the council as it seeks to find ways to save money and bring in extra cash; for example, the Blue Badge charge for residents will increase from £5.52 to £10.

Even with all the proposed savings, there will still be an estimated £17m budget cut, so more cuts are likely.

Some of the plans will require formal public consultation; Healthwatch Reading is available now and in the future to collect feedback from individuals who want to discuss how the plans might affect them.

The plans can be read in full at: [http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/5708/item09-2/pdf/item09_\(2\).pdf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/5708/item09-2/pdf/item09_(2).pdf)





LATEST QUALITY RATINGS FOR LOCAL SERVICES

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the national body that checks how NHS and social care services are performing.



‘special measures’ or even close them.

Last month it revealed its latest ratings for the following Reading organisations:

Charles Clore Court Extra Care Sheltered Housing: ‘Good’

The full report is at:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-394984133/registration-info>

The care at Charles Clore Court is currently provided to residents by Reading Borough Council employees. CQC inspectors said people living at Charles Clore Court were treated with kindness and compassion by friendly care workers. People’s dignity was respected and they were supported to remain as independent as they wished.

Abbeyfield care home: ‘Good’

Full report at:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-119835906/reports>

This nursing and care home for 28 older people is based on Maitland Rd.

Inspectors said people told them they enjoyed living in the calm and relaxed environment. A sensory garden had also recently been created.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN AUGUST

Saturday 13th

Reading Mencap Summer Fair 1-3.30pm, 21 Alexandra Road, RG1 5PE

Telephone 0118 966 2518 or email communityfundraiser@readingmencap.org.uk

Tuesday 16th

NHS Blood Donation Session, St Andrews Church from 9.55am

Telephone 0300 123 23 23 or visit www.blood.co.uk

If you would like to publicise an upcoming event via our newsletter or website, please contact us on 0118 937 2295 or email info@healthwatchreading.co.uk

