

## **Cancer Services for Isle of Wight Residents: Co-ordination, Travel and Urgent Assistance**

Extract from full report considered by the committee at its meeting on 15 October 2018 :-

### **CONCLUSIONS**

From the 2017 Healthwatch survey on cancer services, it is clear that there is a widespread continued appreciation for the treatments available to Isle of Wight residents, and the skills and attitudes of the staff providing them. There is no reason to doubt the quality of service patients receive within local specialist services.

The areas where the survey uncovered concerns related to the broader patient experience, which is particularly important to people with cancer due to the way people pass between different parts of the NHS. This increases the need for service co-ordination and results in many cases in prolonged travel for patients. Given the many stresses associated with a cancer diagnosis, improving these areas would have a major beneficial impact on patients.

Health services for Isle of Wight residents are entering a period of change in which co-ordination between services and more frequent travel look set to become widespread. Making improvements in cancer services at an early stage would offer a positive model for other specialties to learn from.

The role of case co-ordinators is central to this picture, and the survey responses suggest there remains room to improve consistency of access.

Whilst experience of co-ordination between hospitals was generally positive, co-ordination between NHS Trusts and GP practices was less encouraging, with access to information on other services and community support being decidedly mixed.

Comparisons of travel arrangements with those for other U.K. islands highlighted the unique demands on Isle of Wight residents who cross the Solent daily for extended periods to radiotherapy treatment. Difficulties and risks continue to be experienced by patients as a result. Information on current help with travel costs remains patchy. At the time of writing, future levels of support with travel are uncertain, and any change will have an impact on patient experience.

Assistance with unexpected symptoms is also an area where patient experience ranges beyond specialist cancer services. Whilst paramedic services on the Isle of Wight can give cancer-specific treatments more readily than their mainland counterparts, the effectiveness of “flagging” system for these needs to be examined.

At St Marys Hospital, the route of access through Accident and Emergency gives rise to widely differing waiting times, depending on the department’s workload at any given time. For those who become in-patients, concerns over moves from one ward to another and the arrangements for discharge figured largely in the survey.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. This report to be shared with all managers and clinicians involved with cancer services for Isle of Wight residents. All staff to be mindful of connections between services as well as their own specific contribution. Impact of increased awareness to be monitored through feedback from patients and patient groups.
2. Improvements in co-ordination between cancer services in different NHS Trusts should be implemented without delay. Establishing good practice in cancer services to be used a model for other specialties which become more integrated in future.
3. Barriers to communication between specialist cancer services, general practice and community support services should be identified at an early date with the help of patients and patient groups. Improvements should then be implemented without delay.
4. A Charter should be developed without delay setting out the standards expected of NHS providers with regard to travel needs of patients. To include treatment and appointment schedules, admissions and discharge, and processes for service change. This to be a model for other specialties with regard to cross-Solent travel.
5. Local agencies should no longer take decisions in isolation about financial assistance to people travelling for cancer treatment. Before any proposed change, partners including the local NHS, local authority and voluntary and community sector should jointly explore all options to maintain and improve travel support.
6. Ways need to be found for cancer patients to by-pass the accident and emergency department when admissions to St Marys Hospital occur, and to ensure ward moves and discharge take place at appropriate times, with a suitable level of planning and support.

## **APPENDICES ATTACHED**

[Appendix 1: Response to Healthwatch from Director of Acute Services, IW NHS Trust – 18 February 2019](#)

[Appendix 2: Isle of Wight Council's response to the Healthwatch recommendations](#)