

HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

23 MAY 2006

**OUT OF HOURS REVIEW – FURTHER EVIDENCE FROM
MIDDLESBROUGH PRIMARY CARE TRUST**

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To introduce representatives from Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust (PCT) to the Health Scrutiny Panel, to provide additional evidence in relation to the Panels investigation into Out of Hours services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That the Panel makes enquiries with respect to the areas of the Out of Hours services where it requires further information.
3. That the Panel notes the information it receives with a view to incorporating the evidence gathered into its Final Report on the subject.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT

4. As the Panel will recall, it has been gathering evidence on effectiveness of the Out of Hours service provided by Primecare on behalf of Middlesbrough PCT and the other Tees Valley PCTs.
5. Since taking evidence from the PCT at the start of the Review, the Panel has sought evidence from a wide range of sources, including the Cleveland Local Medical Committee, South Tees Hospitals NHS Trust and the Middlesbrough PCT Patient & Public Involvement Forum.
6. As a result of these discussions and evidence gathering exercises, a series of questions has being drafted, on which the Panel requires further information from the PCT, not specifically covered in the first meeting.
7. It is to this end that Middlesbrough PCT are in attendance at today's meeting, to answer the outstanding questions the Panel has and supply any other information felt appropriate by the Panel to conclude its investigation.

8. A list of suggested questions has been drafted on behalf of the Panel to assist in the evidence gathering, which is appended. The appended list has been shared with the PCT in advance of today's meeting, to ensure the PCT is aware of the Panel's particular areas of interest.
9. It is anticipated that following today's meeting a final report will be prepared, outlining the evidence gathered and the Panel's views on the Out of Hours service.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

10. Please see appended list of questions. No other papers were used in the production of this Final Report.

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Suggested Areas of Questioning for Middlesbrough PCT

1. The Panel is interested in the provision of Out of Hours services for people with chronic long-term conditions, such as diabetes or kidney problems, who

may be able, to some extent, to diagnose themselves. Are such cases handled in a different manner to 'ordinary' calls to the Out of Hours services?

2. Does the PCT have any evidence to suggest that more people are engaging directly with Accident & Emergency facilities and/or Ambulance services instead of Out of Hours, since the change to the Out of Hours service arrangements?

A recent report from the House of Commons public accounts committee has highlighted areas of concern for Out of Hours services nationally, particularly over the cost of Out of Hours and the achievement of targets.

3. Has the cost of the provision of Out of Hours been as predicted, or has the PCT had to expend more than was budgeted for?
4. As of November 2005, the Out of Hours contract had not been signed. Has the Out of Hours contract been signed yet?
5. What percentages of patients are assessed within the stated timeframe for urgent/emergency calls?
6. Jo Webber of the NHS Confederation, which represents 90% of health service organisations, said that 80% of patients were satisfied with the service. Does that hold true for the experience in the Tees Valley?¹
7. In what way will the PCT's experience of Out of Hours so far inform its future plans for the provision of the Out of Hours service?
8. How does the PCT think the Out of Hours service can improve?
9. What does the PCT see as the biggest impacts of the new Out of Hours service on primary care services?

¹ Please see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/health/4969462.stm>