

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item 4

HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

16 MARCH 2015

GP Practices in Middlesbrough – Discussion

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To present the panel with an outline of the purpose of the meeting.

BACKGROUND

Information received to date

2. Members will recall that the panel met on 2 February to discuss a number of areas of concern including: long term workforce planning issues; GP recruitment and retirement; and the increasing demand for GP appointments.
3. The panel was told that there is a shortage of people taking up GP training places, that doctors are retiring earlier or opting to work part time and that in this area it can be difficult to recruit GPs to vacant posts. The panel were concerned that there could be a future 'crisis' if a number of GPs in Middlesbrough retired early or gave their notice.
4. The panel have heard on numerous occasions that the demand for appointments is increasing, patients are presenting with more complex cases and this demand is exacerbated by the increasing elderly population. The panel were keen to explore this issue further and assess what workforce planning is being done in this area. The panel have heard evidence from Dr Canning from the Cleveland Local Medical Committee, and the panel thought it would be prudent to speak to the appropriate health agencies to seek their views and gain an understanding of the work that is taking place to mitigate the effects of falling numbers of GPs, recruitment difficulties and rising demand.
5. The panel were told that there was a suggestion that practices could merge which would result in more GPs being available within a practice. Another option could be that GP practices could also form a Federation, where GPs could retain their own identity but would benefit from the economies of scale of being part of a larger body.
6. In order to ensure doctors remain in General Practice the panel were told that a range of measures were needed which could include the following

- Giving Doctors a varied portfolio which could include research, public health, general practice and community services
- Developing GPs skills after training
- Time and other opportunities to use their variety of skills
- Diversity and the option to become more involved in minor surgery, and administering injections for certain conditions.

National Picture

7. Headlines in the BBC News detail how GP shortages put pressure on doctors and patients.¹ The article details how a BBC investigation has uncovered a national shortage of GPs. Culminating in the number of unfilled GP posts quadrupling in the past three years.

8. In July 2014 the Centre for Workforce Intelligence (CfWI) was commissioned by the Department of Health and Health Education England (HEE) to conduct an in-depth review of the general practitioner (GP) workforce in England. It was a medium term strategic review looking ahead to 2030 designed to provide the evidence base for forecasting workforce demand and supply. The report concluded that the current level of GPs being trained is inadequate and likely to lead to a major workforce demand-supply imbalance by 2020 unless action is taken.² The CfWI recommends that the HEE consider a substantial increase in GP training numbers and a number of other recommendations including the following
 - Making general practice a more appealing career choice
 - Making it easier for trainees/established practitioners to switch to general practice
 - Increasing the supply of wider care and community clinical staff
 - Scale up GP training capacity
 - Reductions in non-clinical time spent by GPs on paper work and admin
 - Locate GP training posts where patients are currently underserved.
 - GP workforce should be monitored annually and reviewed every 3-5 years
 - Closer alignment of Out of Hours care – allowing GPs to provide Out of Hours care if they wish.

9. Therefore the panel wish to ascertain Middlesbrough's position in this national issue and explore what is being done to ensure a GP crisis won't take place here in the long term.

In attendance

10. It is suggested that the meeting take the form of a round table discussion with the following health representatives who will be in attendance at the meeting.

Dr John Canning – Cleveland Local Medical Council
Representatives from the South Tees CCG

Additional information

¹ BBC News 2 March 2015

² Centre for Workforce Intelligence, In depth review of the general practitioner workforce, July 2014

11. The Chief Workforce Strategist and Planner for NHS Health Education North East (HENE) was invited but was unfortunately unable to attend, however information on the work that HENE are planning/undertaking is being prepared and will be submitted at the meeting.
12. Further information from the South Tees CCG will also be submitted prior to the meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. It is recommended that the position be noted, unless Members agree there are areas which need further investigation

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used in this report.

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