

Adults, Well Being and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date 27th August 2009

Report on the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for North East England response to the North East Ambulance Service proposal for Foundation Trust status



Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. To report for information on the content of the joint response by health scrutiny committee Members from across the north east region to the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) proposals to apply for Foundation Trust status.

Background

2. Proposals for moving to Foundation Trust status are being consulted on until 28th August and are set out in a NEAS document entitled: *Integrating care and transport* (copies have been sent to all Members by NEAS). A Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for North East England was formed from representatives from all 12 authorities from across the region and it met on 17th August. Views and opinions expressed are to be incorporated into a joint response to the proposals. The full joint response is not available at this stage but will be made available in due course
3. The joint committee is established in line with the regulations for joint committees (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Health Scrutiny Functions, July 2003). The committee agreed a Terms of Reference and set of protocols as the basis of its approach - and copies can be provided should this be of interest to Members at this stage. The consultation is being undertaken because the proposal represents a substantial development or variation in the provision of a health service – and in particular represents a change to governance which affects an NHS body's relationship with the public or local overview and scrutiny committees.

4. Following the consultation NEAS will submit a formal request to the Secretary of State for Health to support the application in December, with a decision expected in January 2010. If supported then Monitor would consider the proposal and authorisation could be forthcoming from April 2010.

Response to consultation

5. The issues that form the response from the joint committee are grouped into those that relate to governance and those that relate to services.

Governance:

- NEAS proposes to have a public membership of at least 4,200 members growing to 10,000 within three years of becoming a Foundation Trust. Members were concerned at the magnitude of costs of developing and servicing, including training and development, for a membership of this size, and these costs should be minimised.
- Members would wish to see any surpluses generated by the Foundation Trust re-invested in front-line services.
- Concerns were expressed that Membership of the Foundation Trust should attempt to avoid single interest agenda's. The Foundation Trust should seek opportunities to engage users and carers and hard to reach communities, recognising equality and diversity issues (note the reference to young people below), it is recognised that a filter/appeals system would be required to deal with potential conflicts of interest.
- Members requested that Board meetings should continue to be held in public at a range of venues across the region.
- NEAS proposals are for Membership to be open to those aged over 12 years. Members were keen to support this proposal and suggested that consideration should be given to methods that are used to engage with young people, as well as the structures that could be utilised such as Local Children's Boards, and in Durham, Investors in Children.
- Members would wish to see a freeze for twelve months on the level of remuneration for Directors and Non Executive Directors of the Foundation Trust.
- The geographical split of public governors on the Boards should be aligned to Local Involvement Network areas across the region.
- NEAS proposals are for only one local authority representative on the Board of Governors. Members suggested there should be twelve - one for each local authority area. In Durham we suggest that discussions are taken forward with the Association of North East Councils on this matter, and also that examples of other models for local authority membership are considered such as Tees Esk and Wear Valleys Mental Health Foundation Trust.
- In Durham, the overview and scrutiny function looks forward to continuing to provide challenge to all Foundation Trusts covering Durham and to a positive relationship to that end.

Services:

- Consideration should be given by NEAS to adopting the Air Ambulance Service to ensure its services in future.
- Concerns were expressed over the consultation materials produced in that they do not sufficiently meet accessibility requirements.
- Ambulance response times in rural areas continues to be a concern and Members would wish to see this improve and will continue to monitor the situation.

Recommendations

6. Members are asked to note the content of this report.

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