

**Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

11<sup>th</sup> September 2008



**County Durham Primary Care Trust  
proposals for modernising Rural  
Ambulance Services**

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**Report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To consider proposals from County Durham Primary Care Trust for the modernisation of Rural Ambulance Services provided in the Teesdale and Weardale areas – agenda item 2 (b).

**Background**

2. Proposals for modernising rural ambulance services were agreed by the former Durham Dales Primary Care Trust in September 2006 for:
  - A 24/7 ambulance service to be established in the Weardale and Teesdale areas staffed by Community Paramedics and a Technician.
  - For the current ambulance stations to remain in place until the changes have been evaluated and proved to be more effective. This option was being put forward to address public concern that the proposal is a significant change in service that may have a detrimental effect on the most rural and isolated areas.
3. The JHOSC has continued to consider and comment on the proposals as they have developed and the dialogue with communities has continued. Members are referred to the papers of the JHOSC meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at which there was consideration of the service evaluation undertaken by the Durham Dales PCT and the North East Ambulance Service. Conclusions to this evaluation are detailed in Appendix 1 of report 2 (b).

**Information**

4. The County Durham Primary Care Trust Board is to make a final decision on these proposals at its Board meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> October.
5. Members are asked to note the conclusions from the monitoring exercise set out on pages 4 and 5 in Appendix 1 to the paper 2 (b), in particular in

relation to areas of performance and outcomes observed and derived from the changes made.

6. Members are asked to note the summary of local community concerns to the proposals, and the response to them, set out on page 5 and 6 in Appendix 1 to the paper 2 (b).
7. Members are asked to note the implications and risks from the options set out on pages 7 and 8 in Appendix 2 to the paper 2 (b).

**The JHOSC notes:**

8. That the proposals represent enhanced investment to provide improved integrated working between primary care teams and ambulance staff to meet the needs of communities in Teesdale and Weardale.
9. That the Ambulance Stations in St Johns Chapel and Middleton-in-Teesdale are not planned to close and that potential exists to increase their usage for outreach urgent care.
10. That there is to be a next stage piece of work to look at the potential to increase usage of the stations.
11. That aspects of poor performance within the Ambulance Service need to be addressed as a matter of urgency and progress reported to JHOSC.
12. The active consultation that has taken place over recent years in the development of these proposals and the positive way in which County Durham Primary Care Trust and the North East Ambulance Service has responded to public and stakeholder concerns.
13. The proposal to establish a new stakeholder group, including local clinical and political leaders and community representatives who will receive information and feedback on the implementation of new service models.
14. That activity levels in both Dales remain low, providing greater potential for integrated working, recognising that the emergency response is the key priority for the ambulance service.

**Recommendations**

- (i) The JHOSC acknowledges the work that County Durham Primary Care Trust and the North East Ambulance Service has done with respect to the views and concerns of local residents affected by proposals to modernise rural ambulance services.
- (ii) The JHOSC welcomes further investment in rural ambulance services and suggestions to increase the usage of existing ambulance stations to best effect to respond to the needs of local communities.

- (iii) The JHOSC welcomes the proposal to establish a stakeholder group and looks forward to receiving the Terms of Reference of this group. The JHOSC suggests that this group should:
- Help to evaluate the implementation of service models and to shape the development of these services models where appropriate, ensuring poor performance is addressed.
  - Has a specific role in relation to the further evaluation and costing of outreach urgent care and the potential for increased usage of the ambulance stations.
  - Regularly reports to JHOSC on implementation of the new service models from the group.
- (iv) The JHOSC recognises that service models need to be implemented and that improved performance and responding to local community needs must be essential criteria. In line with this then, the JHOSC would like to see evidence of how effective the proposed service model, based on the preferred County Durham Primary Care Trust option, will deliver good health outcomes. The JHOSC will want to see evidence on the implementation and performance of the service model in 12-18 months time.

**Background papers:**

Rural Ambulance Services – County Durham Primary Care Trust, Sept 2008

Review of Ambulance Service Provision in Weardale and Teesdale, Durham Dales PCT and NEAS

Monitoring Rural Ambulance Services – The Patient and Public Perspective

Modernising Ambulance Services in Rural Areas consultation document.

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