

Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

19 January 2018

North Durham CCG – Rapid Specialist Opinion service



Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update in respect of a clinical audit undertaken in respect of North Durham Clinical Commissioning Group's Rapid Specialist Opinion (RSO) service.

Background

- 2 With effect from 17 October 2016, North Durham Clinical Commissioning Group introduced a new Rapid Specialist Opinion service which aimed to ensure that patients receive the most appropriate treatment for their condition in the most appropriate place.
- 3 The service was brought to the attention of the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee following local press and media coverage which resulted in a request being made to the CCG to provide a briefing paper to the Committee setting out the provisions of the service and the rationale for its introduction. A briefing paper was received from North Durham CCG in November 2016 and circulated to members of the Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC (Appendix 2 refers).
- 4 The issue was subsequently discussed during consideration of the media issues item at the Committee's meeting held on 14 November 2016.
- 5 Members were advised that the RSO service covered referrals for a specified range of specialties including dermatology; ophthalmology; ear, nose and throat; gastroenterology; cardiology and gynaecology.
- 6 The service did not include all referrals with very urgent and cancer two-week wait referrals being specifically excluded from the service.

Representations from Roberta Blackman-Woods, M.P. for City of Durham Constituency

- 7 At a meeting of the Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC on 2 October 2017, Roberta Blackman-Woods, MP addressed the Committee and questioned

representatives from North Durham CCG about the RSO process. Concerns raised by Ms. Blackman-Woods and Councillors included:-

- The speed with which the new process had been introduced;
- The lack of engagement with patients, local councillors and MPs;
- The concerns of GPs who considered the RSO process to be compulsory;
- The Data Protection issues associated with sharing patient information and how this was undertaken for patients who may have mental health capacity issues;
- The perception that the SRO process was an attempt to further privatise an element of the NHS.

8 In response, Dr Neil O'Brien, Chief Clinical Officer for North Durham CCG stressed that Rapid Specialist Opinion (RSO) was a process whereby GPs were encouraged to seek an SRO where alternative treatments might be more appropriate rather than an immediate referral to a consultant. Dr O'Brien stated that the scheme was not mandated. The CCG did monitor the number of practices that had taken up the new scheme and engaged with those who hadn't to find out if they had any concerns. The web based guidelines were developed over two and half years ago and were considered to be best national practice.

9 Dr O'Brien gave an example of acne treatment where the RSO might suggest that the patient's GP try antibiotics before referral to a specialist. The system is coordinated by a private company but NHS consultants look at the data and they looked at primary treatments before a referral. The system does allow diversion of a referral to advanced primary care, it is a voluntary scheme but excludes all urgent referrals.

10 North Durham CCG had engaged with practices and talked to GPs and whilst it has been conceded that the scheme was implemented quickly, no adverse incidents have been reported about the process.

11 A series of clinical audits have been undertaken to evaluate the RSO process and the CCG has agreed to brief scrutiny on the outcome of the audit.

RSO Process – Clinical Audit findings

12 Representatives of North Durham CCG will be in attendance at the meeting to report upon the findings of the clinical audit undertaken of the RSO process and what the findings mean for the future of the service moving forward. A copy of the audit report is attached to this report (Appendix 3)

Recommendation

- 13 The Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:-
1. receive this report;
 2. note and comment on the information provided by North Durham CCG in respect of the clinical audit into the RSO process.

Background papers

Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC Agenda and minutes - 2 October 2017

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - None

Staffing - None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation - None

Procurement - None

Disability Issues - None

Legal Implications - None