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LINK Representatives' Report of NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent
Primary Care Trust Board Meeting, 27 January 2010

From its inception, NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust (ECK PCT) has been keen to develop its links with the public it serves. To this end, through its Director of Citizen's Engagement and Communications, it has established a number of user groups. At the last board meeting of the ECK PCT, two members of the Kent Local Involvement Network (LINK) were co-opted onto the board, which gives direct access for the directors to the public and vice versa.

It is our intention that after each board meeting we will highlight points which have significant reference to particular groups within the community of Eastern and Coastal Kent. Should you have anything you wish to raise with the board, you can liaise with Kent & Medway Networks Ltd (KMN) through the email contacts for LINK or by post, which can then pass on your queries. Should you wish to take advantage of this, you may like to read previous board papers at the link below to see if your queries have already been addressed.

<http://www.easternandcoastalkent.nhs.uk/about-us/the-board/board-meetings-and-papers/>

These can also be accessed at your local library.

Much of the work of the ECKPCT centres on the purchasing of health services for the public of Eastern and Coastal Kent. Examples of this would be the provision of dentistry, ophthalmic services, podiatry, acute services, community hospitals the ambulance service et al. This is done by buying in from a wide range of providers who offer the appropriate service. Alongside this the PCT are responsible for ensuring that all providers meet standards of professionalism, care and safety.

The ECKPCT has a vision for the next five years with regard to its clinical commissioning, and, to date, all actions are meeting its perceived priorities, as well as the national priorities outlined by the Department of Health (DH).

The ECKPCT is charged with producing a five year strategic plan which is updated annually. The plan defines the priorities which best meet the needs of the local population. This has been submitted to the DH for ratification. The plan addresses inequality, services for older people, cancer, coronary and respiratory disease, well being and good mental health, and the life chances for disadvantaged children. This is taking place against the back-drop of financial restraint.

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The ECKPCT is committed to comprehensive and inclusive engagement of its local community. To this end the strategy provides the means to support the PCT in delivering its vision. It constantly seeks new and effective means of listening to and responding to its stakeholders, the public of Eastern and Coastal Kent, through continual improvement to develop this culture of engagement.

At this meeting held on 27 January 2010, a large part of the debate concerned the development and maintenance of services within the present and future financial climate. It is clear that, whatever happens at the forthcoming general election, there will be a tightening of belts and the need to get more out of a limited budget by using it as efficiently as possible.

From the aspect of patient safety, it is pleasing to note that infection figures for MRSA have again been reduced. Flu vaccinations are continuing and the level of influenza has dropped nationally.

It is hoped to develop Braethorpe House as a central location for the delivery of mental well being support services in partnership with Kent County Council. Work is continuing on tackling health of children and young people who have weight issues. This is through a national initiative encompassing the roles of the school nursing service and education, who will provide support for those who are identified as not being of a healthy weight. During April 2010 initial health assessments and medical care will be available for unaccompanied asylum seekers between the ages of 16 and 18 years. This will be for those placed at Millbank reception centre.

A pilot scheme is being developed which will give individuals the opportunity to manage a designated sum for their personal care. This will be their Personal Health Budget. A person will be able to decide on the provider of a service, from within a given list, from whom they would prefer to have their health and social care provided. There are many hurdles to overcome and involves a shift in emphasis, but it is intended to give an individual greater control over and flexibility within their personal healthcare programme.

The ECKPCT is continuing to develop its working relationships with the voluntary and community sector in order to enhance its ability to deliver World Class Commissioning within a clear code of practice.

Roy Coles
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Kent LINK External Representatives
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