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In the words of a French philosopher, "The future isn't what it used to be" and the NHS structure is evolving at such a pace that flexibility within the Primary Care community is going to define the most successful organisations of the future.

In this respect, Somerset is well placed to respond and deliver around the commissioning challenges. We are now recognised as a first wave pathfinder consortium and there are evolving federations, two of which have pathfinder status, getting involved in more detailed commissioning discussions.

It has been recognised for the last few months that the new consortium groupings will be statutory bodies, approved by a National Commissioning Board. The role for WyvernHealth.Com as a practice based commissioning company limited by guarantee will therefore be time limited.

The aspiration is to create a countywide shadow GP commissioning board by the end of April 2011 and in a synchronised manner wind down WyvernHealth.Com in line with its constitution. The communications from the transition group have been handed to the LMC and a regular newsletter is in circulation.

WyvernHealth.Com staff are employees of NHS Somerset and as such will enter the process of facilitation for future employment which NHS Somerset is deploying. It must not be forgotten in all this structural redesign that active commissioning must continue and WyvernHealth.Com in the national context is an exemplar company. The skills developed by the management team and Board members will be essential in the "new world".

We believe there will be an intimate relationship between commissioning and practices in the future that will soon define the way we all work in our consulting rooms, practice teams, federations and consortia. "Every decision is a commissioning decision" could be a mantra that may take on real significance in the way that we all think. Commissioning is a patient centric process that we all undertake in every consultation. The challenge is to increase our sophistication in understanding how we extend the process to our communities. WyvernHealth.Com has been learning and developing relationships over the last three years, all of which will come into play in the coming months.

Developing new commissioners in Somerset is a priority for all the involved organisations and WyvernHealth.Com can only be positive about how satisfying the process can be at a personal level. If you feel you have an interest in designing services in the future then we would urge you to consider a position on the county board or your federation. There will be another newsletter in April but thank you for your support over the last few years.

The WH.C Board

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Acute Care GP (ACGP)

Could you please note that the GP Acute Care contract is not being renewed and this service will cease on 31 March 2011.

Somerset Community RightSteps

The PCT have recognised that the current waiting times for access to treatments from RightSteps Psychological Therapies service is unacceptable to patients, GPs and the Trust. Over the last couple of months WyvernHealth.Com has been asked to work with the commissioners at the PCT and the RightSteps provider to develop an action plan to improve the service and achieve a four week waiting time target as laid out in the contract.

There are a number of challenges to be overcome including managing demand, validating data and matching resources to where demand is most, signposting patients to the appropriate level of intervention and getting right the interface between the RightSteps service and Secondary care. In validating the long wait patients, a number of practices have raised concerns about the way patients have been discharged from the service. WyvernHealth.Com has sought assurances on behalf of the practices that patients who are incorrectly removed from the waiting list are put back on without "losing their place", and that future validation processes have a more appropriate timescale. The PCT will send out further communication in due course on this matter.

RightSteps will develop an information pack to be distributed to practices to help channel patients more to the appropriate type of service on offer. They have advised us that a range of interventions are available at their disposal to help patients, but it is important that during the referral process by the GP, that patients expectation of the type of intervention they will receive is managed during the initial triage assessment by RightSteps, which is now carried out on almost all patients within ten calendar days. All patients who have undergone an intervention that does not involve one-to-one counselling have a further assessment to ensure that their psychological needs have been met.

The process of getting the service fit for purpose does remain challenging, and there is recognition of the frustration felt by primary care around the interface between GPs, RightSteps and Somerset Partnership. The acquisition of Somerset Community Health by the Somerset Partnership should help in this process as the services will become interlinked, and this should significantly impact upon the dreaded "bounced referral" problem we all experience.

Somerset and North Devon Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme

The Somerset and North Devon Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening Programme has now gone live following completion of the first screening clinic at French Weir Surgery in Taunton. The programme is based at Musgrove Park Hospital and is lead by Mr Andrew Stewart and managed by Karen Bentley-Hollins. AAA screening is a locally delivered simple ultrasound test which the NHS is offering free of charge to all men in the year they turn 65. The attached publication provides an overview of the programme and contact details for the programme office.

Further information about the programme can be found on Taunton and Somerset's intranet site, at: <http://intranet.tsft.nhs.uk/Default.aspx?alias=intranet.tsft.nhs.uk/aaascreen>

This will also be viewable shortly via Taunton & Somerset's internet site, choose "Our Services" and then A.

The Programme Manager will be in contact with GP Practices in Somerset and North Devon over the next few months to arrange a site visit and schedule clinic sessions. In the meantime, Mr Stewart would be pleased to meet with GP colleagues to talk about the programme in more detail and answer any questions you may have. Please contact the Somerset and North Devon AAA Programme Office if you would like more information about the programme or if you would like to arrange for Mr Stewart to visit with your Practice or Federation.

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Personal Health Budgets for Stroke Survivors in Somerset

NHS Somerset is taking part in a national research project which is looking into the potential benefits of stroke survivors having a Personal Health Budget to support their rehabilitation. Twenty patients will be recruited to the study; ten will be randomly allocated to the budget group and ten to the comparison group. The research is being evaluated by the Personal Health Budget Evaluation (PHBE) team at the University of Kent.

Patients will be invited to join the study by the Stroke Co-ordinator at Williton and those who agree to consider this will be contacted by Margaret Bamford who is the Care Coordinator. Margaret will discuss the study with each patient and if they agree to take part they will be randomly allocated to either the PHB or comparison group.

Those in the PHB group will then work with Margaret to develop a plan to support the patient's rehabilitation goals. This will not affect their normal NHS care through the GP practice, their stroke consultant or Emergency Care nor will it entitle them to services which would exceed the value of those which would be provided through the normal NHS route.

The purpose of the study is to find out whether personal Health Budgets improve choice and to improve outcomes. Both groups will be assessed in the same way using validated questionnaires at the start and after twelve months. In addition each patient's GP will be asked to complete a very brief questionnaire, which is designed to take just a couple of minutes. The questionnaire will ask about the patient's use of primary and secondary care services in the year of the study.

Margaret will write to the GP of each individual patient recruited to the study enclosing a copy of the questionnaire for information. The researchers will contact you directly at the end of the evaluation. If you have any queries regarding this study please contact margaret.bamford@somerset.nhs.uk or emma.dunford@somerset.nhs.uk

Update on Shepton Mallet Treatment Centre

Please note the new contract starts officially on Tuesday 15 March and the new services agreed in this contract will start on that date. Practices should have received materials from UKSH that include weblinks outlining the new services. The directory of services has been updated to include the new services so they can be accessed via choose and book now.

Diabetes Management in Primary Care

WyvernHealth.Com is delighted to have secured funding towards the above course which has been approved by Teesside University. The course aims to further develop the knowledge and skills required to facilitate the holistic management of clients with diabetes in primary care and is aimed at doctors, nurses, dietitians and pharmacists. Further information can be obtained from the attached flyer.

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 23 March, Long-Term Condition Programmes in the South West - event being held in Taunton – contact m.dolman@btinternet.com for further information

Thursday 31 March (9.30 am to 4.00 pm), GP Commissioning Development Programme – event being held at Somerset County Cricket Ground, Taunton. Please Email napc@napc.co.uk to register.

Wednesday 6 April (12.45 pm to 4.45 pm – including registration and lunch) Practical Management of Dermatology in Primary Care, Dillington House, Ilminster. Further details to follow.

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