

Taunton Deane Disability Discussion Group
Tues 25th November - Compass Disability Meetings Room

Those Present

Jo Wakefield – Membership Manager Musgrove Park Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Tim Lewis – Somerset Skills & Learning

Musgrove Park Hospital

Jo Wakefield explained that Musgrove Hospital is now managed by a Foundation Trust which is a new type of NHS organisation, set up as independent, not for profit, public benefit corporation.

Foundation Trusts are run locally with greater freedom from central government, allowing them to develop services that respond to local needs. Any money saved at the end of the financial year can be used in the next year.

The trust welcomes membership from any individual which is free and enables you to keep up to date with what's going on at the hospital by receiving a regular newsletter. They also run 'Medicine for Members' meetings which are exclusive for members, on subjects such as Getting Older Gracefully, How to Have a Healthy Heart and Managing Diabetes. Being a member also gives you the opportunity to let the trust know what services you want to see in your local hospital and you can also put yourself forward to become a local governor if you wish. Focus Groups also take place to consult on topics, a recent example was The Patient Booking Service.

Jo updated the group on new projects in place at the hospital;

- A new cancer centre will open in May 2009 called The Beacon Centre. This will mean that patients will not have to travel to Bristol for their cancer treatment apart from exceptional circumstances.
- A new surgical centre will replace the 1940's building. This is part of a three phased development. In 2010 work will commence on a new Emergency Assessment Unit (EAU) and surgical ward block. The EAU will be located next to the existing A&E. The five storey surgical ward block will have four wards, each with single bedrooms with en-suite facilities. The EAU should be operational by 2011 and the new surgical wards opening in 2012. The third phase, to provide operating theatres and a Critical Care Unit, will be finished by 2015. Groups will be asked to look at the plans when they are available.

A member of the group asked what will happen about the League of Friends shop and the Florist when the new build takes place. It was suggested that a more welcoming entrance area should be considered to incorporate a coffee shop, and the other shops currently in place around the hospital. Jo agreed to take these comments back and find out what is happening about the shops.

Another suggestion from one member was to have a mobility shop in place where the current Dental Practice exists, with profits from sale of goods going back into the hospital.

Other comments to improve facilities included;

- If you come to the hospital expecting to have a volunteer assist you, it's not easy to know how to locate them. Can a button or phone (clearly marked) be available at the entrance to contact an office to reach someone?
- Could the name 'Duchess' be painted on the floor of the entrance to the building. The current sign is not clearly visible.
- Yeovil Hospital has electronic sensor mats at the ward entrance to ask people if they have cleaned their hands. This was felt to be a good idea.

The lack of available wheelchairs was raised to travel the long distance between wards in the old building. Jo advised that many go missing and that it is a problem, but that you can knock on any office door near the entrance and they will arrange to phone a porter.

A question was asked will car parking charges increase?

There are no plans to increase charges. The reason for the charges is to prevent people from parking at the hospital and walking into town. A 20 year contract is in place with Q parks to maintain the car parks. 13% of the profits from the car parks go back into the hospital.

The distance from the multi storey car park to other parts of the hospital was raised as an issue particularly for people who cannot walk very far. As parking may be an issue when then building work is in place, the group suggested providing temporary parking facilities for disabled people.

The group also raised their disappointment that the Park and Ride service had stopped to the hospital. Jo explained that this was the decision of Taunton Deane Borough Council after reviewing how many people were using the service.

One person raised an issue when an assessment had taken place and the patient could not have an indication of when an operation would take place. Jo advised that the patient can contact their GP to chase this and that the Choose and Book system, which operates from Bridgwater, will allow you a choice of hospitals with information on waiting lists etc. You can also choose to go elsewhere in the Country.

One person had experienced a situation where information had not been passed on to Exeter Hospital from Taunton, and asked if computer systems were connected to each other. Jo explained that the current patient information is only available electronically within the hospital and that other hospitals are not linked via computer. The government are looking at reviewing the current system as there are glitches.

Are there any plans for plastic surgery at Musgrove? Plastic surgery is currently provided but it is fairly limited to maxillo facial surgery, pinnaplasty, etc. There are currently discussions regarding extending this and including breast reconstruction when the Beacon centre opens, however this has not been confirmed as yet.

Membership Forms and Newsletters were left at the SAIN offices for information.

Other Issues

Following the last meeting SAIN contacted First Buses concerning the issue which was raised concerning access on the 92 service to Exeter. First Buses advised that the 92 route has mostly lower floor vehicles with the exception of the 7.25am and 4.30pm buses which are Double Decker to allow for the number of college students using the service at that time. A press release is due to be issued this week concerning the addition of 5 new buses with low floor access for Taunton town services. Government legislation requires public transport to be accessible by 2015, First Buses advise that their vehicles will be accessible by 2012 and have agreed to come along to a future group to discuss this.

One member commented that the 97 route is always a small bus with steps which prevents them using this. This person has taxi vouchers (£30 per year) from the borough council, which means they cannot have a bus pass, the vouchers do not last very long at all. Why can you not have a bus pass to use as well?

The group agreed they would like an update on transport. With Taunton Deane Community Transport now being managed by Transporting

Somerset, will it mean they can go outside the area? What about Slinky services are they completely accessible?

Information services need to be coordinated in the phone book to make it easier for people to find them. A suggestion was to put Somerset Direct under DIS (Disability Information Services).

Future speakers discussed included;
Somerset Direct, Age Concern, Local Police.
Someone to address issues such as dropped kerbs and access for scooters.
Taunton Deane to discuss the piper line system.
The new Town Centre Manager.

Somerset Skills & Learning

Tim Lewis attended the next part of the meeting to give an overview of some of the courses being offered by Somerset Skill & Learning (previously called Adult Learning and Leisure, now merged with Somerset County Training). They also offer information, guidance and advice on skills required for certain jobs.

In summary courses offered include;

- Leisure Course (Yoga, Thai Chi, Language Courses)
- Computer Courses (from basic skills upwards)
- Volunteer Courses & Make your Experience Count for retired people or people who have been made redundant to give confidence or for those who may want to help in schools. This course is the only course currently which is provided free.
- Work preparation courses.
- Learning Champions Course – a new course in Ilminster to help people be aware of what's out there and learn listening skills, presenting skills etc.

If you have an idea for a course it can be considered providing there is an interest of 10 people or more. If the course is numeracy or literacy related funding from other areas may be possible.

Costs start from approx. £45 for a one term course, if a course costs over £50 payments can be made in instalments. Courses take place in various venues in the area. For more details please contact **0845 688 0488**
or Email: generalenquiries@somerset.gov.uk

