

Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

12 June 2019

West Sussex Low Vision Service

Report by Coastal West Sussex, Horsham & Mid Sussex, Crawley Clinical Commissioning Groups and Paul McKay, Director of Adult Services.

Summary

The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) approached the West Sussex Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee regarding the provision of low vision services within West Sussex following a decision by the Horsham & Mid Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group to decommission low vision services within the CCG area.

Focus from scrutiny

The Committee is asked to consider whether there is an equity of provision of low vision services for West Sussex residents, regardless of the CCG area in which they live.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Low Vision Services (LVS) support people with loss of vision to regain or maintain as much independence as possible by enabling them to maximise their residual vision through low vision aids. The service also provides information and support for people living with low vision.
- 1.2 Early in 2017 Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), as the lead commissioner for the LVS which covered the Mid Sussex area, undertook a review of contracts that were due to expire in March 2017. The service was commissioned jointly between Brighton and Hove, Horsham and Mid Sussex and High Weald Lewes Havens CCGs and Brighton and Hove City Council. At that point the decision was made to extend the contract for one year to enable a robust review of the service and to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment (of copy of which can be found at appendix 1).
- 1.3 Following this review Brighton & Hove CCG made the decision to transfer the commissioning of the service from the CCG to the Local Authority (LA), as it was agreed that the service was more appropriately commissioned by WSCC rather than Health Care services.

2. Issues for consideration by the Select Committee

- 4.1 The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) has queried the decision made by B&HCCG to decommission the low vision service. It was specifically concerned that the changes to the commissioning of the Low Vision Service (LVS) would mean that Horsham and Mid Sussex patients

would need to be referred to an acute trust for a low vision appointment and that this would lead to capacity issues.

- 4.2 The RNIB also raised concerns about the way that the decision was made suggesting that it potentially breached the requirements of the National Health Service Commissioning Board and Clinical Commissioning Groups (Responsibilities and Standing Rules).
- 4.3 The decision regarding the future of the LVS was made by Brighton and Hove (B&H) CCG in the context of ensuring the most appropriate use of resources across the local health economy. It was felt that by transferring the commissioning responsibility from the CCGs to the LAs would create a consistent commissioning position across Sussex.
- 4.4 In the current financial climate it is important that CCGs ensure they spend their allocated public funds on getting the best possible health outcomes for their local populations. B&H CCG, in making this decision regarding the LVS gave full consideration to a number of factors including the equality and quality impacts, the effectiveness and outcomes from the service and whether it aligned to the CCGs' strategic objectives for the commissioning of local healthcare. As such B&H CCG felt that the decision making, impact analysis and engagement surrounding the decision to transfer the funding responsibility of the LVS was appropriate and proportionate.

Service provision for Mid Sussex, Horsham and Crawley

- 4.5 A Low Vision Service is delivered at Crawley and Horsham Hospitals as part of the CCG contract with Surrey and Sussex Healthcare Trust. 4Sight delivers the service under a sub-contractor agreement with Sight for Surrey.
- 4.6 It is important to note that patients from Mid Sussex can also access this service if they have not attended the eye clinic through GP referral.
- 4.7 Alternatively Horsham and Mid Sussex patients can be referred to the Rehabilitation Officers for the Visually Impaired (ROVI) Team at WSCC via opticians and ophthalmology clinics. The ROVI service has reported an increase in demand as a consequence of this change; however the service has been able to manage the increase in referrals. Horsham and Mid Sussex patients that require a magnifier are referred to 4Sight for assessment (£25 home visit) and then have to pay for a magnifier (between £35 and £80).

Service provision for Coastal West Sussex

- 4.8 The LVS service in Coastal West Sussex is delivered by 4Sight Sight Loss Advisors in Worthing and Chichester hospitals who can issue a Hospital Eye Services Prescription, which can be redeemed for assessment and free magnifier at participating opticians. However there are vision eligibility criteria in place.

3. Consultation

- 5.1 B&H CCG, as the lead commissioner commissioned a multi-agency panel, including colleagues from Brighton and Hove Adult Social Care Services and Local Public Health Team, to review a number of services including the LVS. This review included a quality impact assessment to understand the possible impact of not commissioning the Low Vision service. On the balance of evidence, the recommendation, supported by the CCG, was that this did not represent the best value clinical care and, in addition, identified alternative services that could support people with visual needs. The CCG also consulted with Healthwatch Brighton and Hove and Community Works as part of the decision process, along with the other associate commissioning CCGs.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 One option was for the CCGs to continue to fund the service. The review of the service found that it was not widely used and the CCGs view was that it was more appropriately funded by the LA.

5. Equality Duty

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the decision making process, a copy of which can be found at appendix 1.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 It is acknowledged that for historic reasons and, as a consequence of the change of commissioning arrangements for the Brighton service, there is some inequity in the way LVS services are currently provided in West Sussex. In order to address this, a task and finish group involving WSCC and the CCG, with input from the RNIB will be set up; which will report to HASC by Autumn 2019. The objectives of the group will be to review the provision of LVS across West Sussex and identify options to address current inequities and agree future commissioning arrangements across West Sussex.

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Crawley, Horsham and Mid Sussex and, Coastal West Sussex CCG

Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers - None