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Cllr Thomas
Chair Scrutiny Board 5
Coventry City Council
The Council House
Earl Street
Coventry
CV1 5RR

19 November 2013

Dear Cllr Thomas

Official referral to Scrutiny Board 5 from Healthwatch Coventry

It is with some regret that I formally ask Scrutiny Board 5 to look into the following issues concerning the re-commissioning of patient transport services and wider concerns about commissioning process.

Healthwatch and Coventry LINK have pressed for improvement to patient transport services since Coventry LINK investigated patient transport for renal patients in 2011. We have been involved in the most recent re-tendering process since December 2012 when we were asked to join the PTS Project Board and take an active role in the tender process, for example at interview stage. We felt that this was an example of good practice in involvement and so began more detailed work which has now stretched over nearly a year.

Unfortunately, we now feel that we have reached the end of our ability to make progress and the Healthwatch Steering Group has significant concerns about the capacity and ability to commission a better service in the context of the new NHS architecture.

Our specific concerns are:

1. There have been significant delays to the tender process. The tendering was paused in order to improve the specification in June 2013, we supported this at the time as we felt the specification needed further work, however the delay has now been considerable.



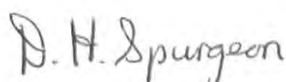
*Healthwatch Coventry
is provided by Here2Help*



2. We have been given different answers about whether the tender ever went out to advert or to the pre-qualification phase. If it did we fear that due to the delay the whole process may have to begin again.
3. There has not been sufficient co-ordination and involvement of different organisations in the process as the PTS Project Board convened last December has met very rarely. Meetings have been cancelled.
4. There does not seem to be adequate leadership of the tender process. When we have raised our concerns with the senior team at Coventry and Rugby CCG we have not had sense that anyone has ownership of the process. The Commissioning Support Unit has the role of carrying out the work but as a commissioned service itself will only do the work that they are asked to do by the CCG(s). There have been changes in the commissioners from the CSU involved in this tender and information did not seem to be passed on. We were informed at our Steering Group meeting on 5 November 2013 that all three Accountable Officers from the 3 CCGs covering Coventry and Warwickshire lead the tender. We have not seen this working. Therefore we have concerns about how successful tendering for such services can and will be managed within the current NHS structures.
5. Existing patient transport contracts have been rolled forward a number of times because of the delays in re-tendering. Therefore the service for patients has not improved. We are aware of issues of effectiveness and patient experience for both patient transport and patient transport for renal patients. Renal patients, for example, still experience the same issues identified by LINK in 2011.

A summary of the work LINK and Healthwatch has done is appended for your information. A copy of our most recent letter to Coventry and Rugby CCG regarding the tender are also attached. Please contact us via the office if you would like any further information.

Yours sincerely



David Spurgeon
Interim Healthwatch Chair



Summary of Coventry LINK and Healthwatch Coventry work related to patient transport

2010-2011	Original LINK project to look at patient transport for renal patients - undertaken due to concerns about journey and waiting times for transport
Aug 2011	Follow up correspondence sent to commissioners regarding their response to LINK's recommendations
November 2011	Follow up visit to check on progress against LINK recommendations - identified that new journey cohort method and other changes had not led to an improvement in waiting time for transport
January-March 2012	Took part in discussions with commissioner regarding draft service specification for proposed re-tendering of patient transport service
July 2012	LINK provided written comment on draft specification and asked regarding the timescales for the tender
December 2012	LINK joined PTS Project Board convened by commissioners (a schedule of regular meetings was timetabled however, a significant number have been cancelled).
May 2013	7/5/13 letter sent to commissioner regarding journey time standards
June 2013	<p>Input into the design of questions to be used for the applications process for the tender - focus on questions about patient experience.</p> <p>Discussion at Healthwatch Steering Group of proposed amendments to journey time standards leading to letter being sent to commissioner (10/6/13) raising concerns regarding journey time and waiting standards. Plus follow up email correspondence.</p> <p>CCG paused the tender.</p>
July 2013	Chair contacted Juliet Hancox to raise concerns about lack of information on progress and there was a chain of email correspondence.
August 2013	New commissioning lead in place for this tender at CSU. New version of specification sent to Healthwatch. Feedback provided.
September 2013	Meeting regarding the specification held. Written comments incorporating SG comments sent to lead commissioner.
October 2013	18/10/13 Healthwatch letter to CCG raising concerns about the management of the tender process
November 2013	Discussion at Steering Group meeting on 5 November of what next. Advised by Esther Peapell that CCG would respond to Healthwatch letter soon but that some information was contractually sensitive. Letter of response received the next day.