

Agenda Item 64: Appendix 1

Out of Hours Care in Brighton and Hove

Key points of the media coverage

There is a wide variation in the coverage of out of hours GP services across England, with Brighton and Hove, Wigan and Bolton highlighted as areas where lone GPs serve more than 240,000 residents. This statistic refers only to the period between midnight and 8am.

The articles all refer to various deaths which have occurred out of hours, including that of Joseph Seevaraj aged 3 from Hove who died in January 2008 due to complications arising from tonsillitis.

Further coverage has arisen following publication of a report by the Primary Care Foundation which does not name specific PCTs, but does identify wide variation in some indicators, such as number of GPs, population, cost, percentage of home visits and calls dealt with over the phone. It is not clear from the coverage how these relate to issues such as population density, number of calls, number of people registered with a GP etc. On all of these indicators, Brighton and Hove is not an outlier, i.e. we are roughly in the middle.

Out of hours service in Brighton and Hove

NHS Brighton and Hove commissions an out of hours GP service from South East Health Ltd. It is a 'not for profit' organisation whose members are local GPs.

This service provides cover:

- Monday to Friday, 6.30 pm – 8 am
- Weekends, 24 hour cover (i.e. Friday 6.30 pm – 8 am on Monday)

That cover consists of the following between midnight and 8 am:

- Weekdays – between midnight and 8 am: there's one GP currently based at Outpatients at the Royal Sussex County Hospital
- Weekends – between midnight and 8 am: there's one GP currently based at Outpatients, plus one GP on standby
- The GP is supported by a trained driver and receptionist and backed up by a call centre team which includes nurses who help to assess patients' requirements at night.

Demand for out of hours service

- Weekdays average activity is between 7 and 10 calls between midnight and 8 am. Around 5% will receive a home visit and 20% will have a face to face consultation in a clinic with a GP.
- Weekends average activity is between 10 to 15 calls between midnight and 8 am each day. Around 12% will receive a home visit and 40% will have a face to face.

Monitoring

We have robust monitoring arrangements in place to ensure that the service provided continues to meet ongoing demand and continues to deliver high quality and safe care for patients. We monitor that data on a monthly basis. Given the number of calls that are received and the number that can be dealt with over the phone, we are confident that GP coverage is more than adequate. Should that demand change, then we would work with South East Health to identify how those standards would be met.

Other options available

Other options are also available for people in Brighton and Hove who need medical care or advice outside normal surgery hours

- Urgent Care Centre at the Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton (open 24 hours a day, seven days a week)
- Brighton Station Health Centre which is open, with a GP on site, from 8 am to 8 pm seven days per week.
- Anyone with a genuine emergency can also use the 999 service