

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes. Two deputations have been received.

(i) Deputation: Integrated Community Equipment Service

It is imperative to have a highly responsive equipment service with delivery targets which are in line with the increasingly tighter timeframes for discharging patients from the acute hospital. Those services which are contracted to a commercial provider do not fully understand the requirements and pressures that prescribers are under to discharge their patients and therefore do not always fulfil agreed delivery targets. Commercial providers need to understand that plans for patients leaving hospital can change within hours and there is a real pressure to discharge a patient on that day. The vast majority of delays related to equipment provision from the acute Trust are related to those individuals who reside in East or West Sussex, both of whom are under commercial provider contracts.

ICES has struggled to deliver within its' budget; this is primarily due to the ongoing increase in the elderly population who are becoming frailer, living longer with complex health needs and resulting dependence. This will not change anytime in the future and tendering to an alternative provider will not create savings commissioners want to see. This is borne out in East and West Sussex where the demand is still on the increase and budgets are overspent. This needs to be recognised and a budget set in line with demand; finding a new provider is not the answer if the service is to be maintained as a first class one. The only way in which a new provider could make a saving would be through employing less staff on worse terms and conditions. This, as we all know, is not the answer either and leads to lack of commitment to a job or service, poor health etc. The staff currently employed within this service are highly motivated and committed and have a real sense of the worth of the role they play in supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our city.

ICES' recycling of equipment occurs whenever possible; A high priority is for Infection Control and that adequate provision of spare parts are considered. This ensures that items purchased are recyclable in the future. Recent updated IT systems and bar-coding of equipment will also enable expensive items to be tracked. On-line ordering systems will also bring the service in line with other equipment providers. These systems will allow for equipment currently not recycled to become so as time goes on.

The most vulnerable people who currently receive this service and will need a service in the future deserve the best money can buy. "Value for Money" is not always as it seems on paper; often outsourced services show a saving but at what cost? This is a relatively small budget in comparison to other AC&H services and we would therefore ask you to really consider whether outsourcing at this time is really beneficial to both the people who use it, now and in the future, and for those committed and longstanding employees who want to continue to provide for our elderly and vulnerable citizens. Employees are very keen to work with management to look at ways savings could be made including looking for alternative premises for the store. They are often the ones with the brightest ideas for ensuring a service survives and produces the best it can in the future.

Sue Beatty
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Brighton & Hove Branch

13th January 2014