

# West Hampshire Out of Hours Service newsletter



Issue 1: August 2005

Welcome to the first out of hours newsletter that will update you on the progress of changes that are happening to the service provided by the West Hampshire PCT cluster in partnership with Hampshire Ambulance Service.

## New number for the Out of Hours service - 0844 811 3060

GP surgeries within west Hampshire have been given the new telephone number for the Out of Hours service so they can update the messages on their answering machines in preparation for 27 September, when Hampshire Ambulance Service will be providing the telephone triage part of the service.

We were unable to keep the existing out of hour's number as it belongs to Primecare. So the West Hampshire PCT cluster have selected a new number for the service – 0844 811 3060 – which will be diverted by Cable & Wireless to Primecare until we are ready to take over the service on Tuesday 27 September. During the afternoon of the 27 September, Cable & Wireless will divert 0844 811 3060 to Hampshire Ambulance Service in Winchester.

Between now and 27 September, both telephone numbers can be used, and will continue to be answered by Primecare in Birmingham. Nearer the time we will be advertising the new telephone number more widely to the public.

After the 27 September, Primecare have advised they will charge us £12 for each processed call one of our patients makes. If GP surgeries have neglected to change their answering machine message to share the new number with their patients, then the £12 charge will be passed to the PCT concerned to pay. To prevent this happening please ensure you have changed your answering machine message in time and updated all of your display literature.

## We're here to provide homecare advice not healthcare advice!

As before, the Out of Hours service will provide urgent clinical care to your patients either over the phone, with a home visit or visit to a primary care centre. Access to a district nurse, CPN or community response teams will be arranged via the Out of Hours hub. Bringing initial call handling, clinical triage and onward disposition together locally will speed up access to the service for patients.

The Out of Hours service will deal with those clinical problems that require (or may require) urgent clinical support that cannot wait until the next working day. It will not provide routine care or healthcare advice - this is best dealt with by the patients' registered GP. Patients who want routine health care advice during the out of hours period may be directed to NHS Direct who are best placed to respond appropriately

The Out of Hours service will also identify frequent users of the services and then work with the patients' GP to ensure those patients understand what the service can and cannot do to meet their needs.

In future patients may be visited at home initially by an Emergency Care Practitioner, but a GP will be available for those who need more complex medical care.

Please work with us to make the new service a success by explaining to your patients how the service can help them, but also how they can help the service.

*Dr David Paynton, Southampton GP and PEC Chair for Southampton City PCT*

## Spotlight

The first of our colleagues to step into the spotlight is Dr Mark Aley, a GP in Eastleigh who also dedicates some of his time to work in the Out of Hours service.

### *Tell us about your role as an Out of Hours GP?*

Traditionally the out of hours role has been simply to provide medical cover for those patients needing it outside of surgery hours. This used to be done 24/7 by the GP's in the partnership, often with an arrangement between practices to cross cover. Many practices began using commercial deputising services in the 80's, and that extended throughout the 90's. The new contract has seen GP's losing the 24-hr responsibility. I feel it is important to try to give some quality out of hours input for the local community and local GP's are, I feel, best placed to provide this.

*continued...*



Out of Hours service covering:

Eastleigh and Test Valley South, Mid Hampshire, New Forest, and Southampton City Primary Care Trusts

## Spotlight *continued*

### **What is the most interesting part of working in Out of Hours?**

The interesting part is the variety of clinical cases one sees. GP's are often found moaning nowadays that we do far too much admin and not enough 'patient' orientated medicine: well, out of hours is big on clinical and small on admin!

### **What has been your biggest challenge?**

The biggest challenge is ploughing through the maelstrom of inappropriate minor problems, and picking up the serious ones hidden within it. That's true for all of medicine though, I think. Dealing with psychiatric cases is frustrating, as well as challenging, and I feel some kind of psychiatric 'flying squad' would allow more appropriate use of us as a source.

### **What is the most satisfying part of working in Out of Hours?**

Getting those unusual diagnoses, or sorting out a hitherto unsolved problem. All GP's see interesting things from time to time; I think they are just more 'concentrated' in the Out of Hours service. It really is interesting clinically, and with the lack of administrative 'clogging' allows one to actually enjoy medicine again.

### **You must see a variety of cases, tell us about them...**

I have picked up more 'interesting' signs in the Out of Hours service than I have in day-to-day practice. Courvoisier's sign I remembered from my undergrad days, but had never seen until last year when I visited a patient with abdominal pain: Bang, there you go instant diagnosis without the need of a scan. There are things like that cropping up all the time. In the last month I have seen a subdural (previously undiagnosed), and a malignant hypertension with eye signs that I have read about but not really seen floridly before. That's on top of a few interesting heart cases, and some forensic psychiatry!

### **What do you think about the changes being made to the Out of Hours service?**

The changes look as if they could improve the efficiency of the service. I hope that the folk organising it listen to the problems those on the 'shop floor' are having, and change things accordingly, and I must say that the signs to date are encouraging.

I think the service would benefit a lot from more local GP input, for without that the quality will suffer. There would not be a lot of commitment needed from each individual GP to give us the foundation of a good service. After all, they are still our patients, and it's nice to look after them.

Hampshire Ambulance are piloting an innovative system that will benefit new Out of Hours service.

### **What exactly is NHS Pathways?**

Pathways is an NHS owned clinical decision support system designed to enhance the triage and consultation process for a wide range of users and currently comprises of two modules.

Module one is designed for telephone use by suitably trained clinicians and non-clinicians to enable them to collect essential clinical and non clinical information, which is then referred, along with the caller, to an appropriate service or clinician. This referral may be to a 999 ambulance at one end of the scale, or a doctor or nurse offering treatment advice at the other. If the outcome of the initial assessment involves an issue that could be resolved on the telephone, but requires a clinician's expertise, a nurse or doctor will conclude the consultation without a face-to-face consultation being necessary.

Module two offers medical staff the ability to easily record the documentation from more complex telephone consultations. The system automatically generates a detailed report of the consultation, which can be passed to the GP or other clinician taking care of the patient.

All staff receive a comprehensive competency based training programme to ensure safety and effectiveness.



## Countdown to the 27th!

On Monday 11 July work began on Hampshire Ambulance's Communications Centre in Winchester, to expand the call centre and increase the number of workstations for the new service. Walls are being knocked down and a raised floor is being built so that all the computer cables can be safely kept out of the way.

Managers from Southampton City PCT, Primecare and Hampshire Ambulance have met with Out of Hours staff. They have been given the opportunity to transfer to the new service in September.

The recruitment campaign has begun in earnest. Posts have been advertised for call handlers who will be the first point of contact for the service, call centre practitioners, who will hold a clinical qualification such as a nurse or paramedic, and clinical team leaders who will be a registered nurse and will have worked in a wide range of specialities including primary/secondary care.

## Feedback

**We're interested to know your thoughts and ideas about this new service. If you have any comments, please contact the Out of Hours lead within your PCT:**

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