

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee Briefing

**Subject: Bedfordshire Phlebotomy Services – Update Paper**  
**Briefing date: 28 January 2019.**

### Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the update on phlebotomy services in Bedfordshire.

### Overview

Phlebotomy across Bedfordshire is delivered through a range of providers: Bedford Hospital Trust (BHT), General Practice, Luton and Dunstable University Hospital (L&D) and East London Foundation Trust (ELFT). In June 2018 L&D relocated their phlebotomy service from the main hospital site to Arndale House in Luton. The Trust still operates a specialist Anticoagulation/Phlebotomy service from the main hospital from Monday – Friday 7.30am – 4.30pm for:

- Children under 12
- Anticoagulation patients
- Those requiring patient transport
- Those receiving specialised blood tests
- Those requiring special access need at the L&D and
- Chemotherapy patients.

The **Arndale House phlebotomy service** operates Monday 8.30am – 4.30pm and Tuesday – Friday 10am – 4.30pm.

The move was part of a wider development of off-site premises for L&D services that do not have a clinical requirement to be co-located on the main hospital campus. The move aimed to address existing constraints with these services including poor accommodation, access and overcrowding and would also help to ensure the L&D can continue to deliver safe and effective acute and specialist care to patients.

The move from L&D to Arndale House mostly affected Bedfordshire CCG (BCCG) patients living in south Bedfordshire including the Chiltern Vale (CV) locality which meant patients would be required to travel into the centre of Luton to have their blood taken, possibly at additional cost and inconvenience.

Although most practices in the Dunstable area provide a phlebotomy service they are often restricted to certain groups of patients because of limited capacity due to staffing and / or premises constraints. Patients who previously received blood tests at their own GP surgery have not been affected as their service has remained unchanged.

BCCG worked with partners to identify possible solutions to the L&D move that could be mobilised quickly to avoid as much inconvenience to patients as possible. The preferred option identified was to approach the new community services provider, East London Foundation Trust (ELFT), to see if they could provide a service in CV, as they already provide a BCCG wide domiciliary phlebotomy service.

The **Chiltern Vale community service started on 22 October at Dunstable Health Clinic** and since then patients have taken up in excess of 1,800 appointments, an average of 36 per day. The service operates between Monday-Thursday 8.30 -12.30 on a walk in system basis and from 28 January will extend its operating hours to 3pm. The original plan was to operate a second clinic in Houghton Regis on Fridays, however securing premises for such a limited period has proved to be unsuccessful consistently, hence the extension in operating hours at the Dunstable Health clinic site.

### **Timeline**

March 2017:	L&D begin communications and engagement programme
June 2018:	L&D move their hospital based service to Arndale House in Luton
October 2018:	ELFT commence community based phlebotomy service in Dunstable.
January 2019:	ELFT extend opening hours of Dunstable Phlebotomy service.

### **Engagement and consultation**

We have engaged with general practices in Chiltern Vale, during the summer of 2018, to understand potential capacity and constraints for delivering more phlebotomy services in Chiltern Vale. However, this was shown to be unviable in the short term.

All nine practices in the Chiltern Vale / Dunstable area were surveyed about the impact of the move on their practices and patients. The feedback received indicated that there was a negative sentiment towards the move, and a feeling that whilst some people preferred the Arndale site, some patient access to phlebotomy services in the area was being restricted. A number of practices also suggested that some patients were refusing to attend the new site thereby potentially missing having their bloods taken which could pose a clinical risk.

Feedback from patients using the Dunstable service has been very positive with patients reporting being very happy with the service as they are seen quickly. Patients have been sharing their experiences on Facebook. ELFT is now looking at ways of capturing comments, compliments and complaints more systematically.

Around 30,000 patients have accessed the phlebotomy/anticoagulation service in the Arndale centre since June 2018 and there have been no informal or formal complaints received since the move.

Feedback via the Friends and Family test has provided 82 comments between June – December 2018. The biggest challenge is managing the demand on the telephone booking line in the absence of an online booking system:

- 'Phlebotomy Arndale House: Impossible to book an appointment over the phone.'
- 'Could not get through on the phone for appointment.'
- 'Although difficult to get through on the phone, was seen quickly and efficiently. Great staff. Easy access, especially when you live in Stopsley.'
- 'Appointment times unavailable, phone line permanently engaged.'

However the experience in the department has improved:

- 'I came for blood test today, the place is very relaxing, especially the new and different colour scheme. The view outside the window is nice as well. I always get nervous for blood tests but today I sat relaxing. The service was very good.'
- 'Great service, such an amazing change, huge improvement, the hospital was too packed, thank you.'
- 'Waiting time is fast, bigger waiting area, area for children to play so child friendly.'
- 'Quick and convenient, helpful staff on telephone whilst booking and giving directions. Lovely staff here with a smile. Had to bring my daughter with me, very happy to see toys and activities for children. Keep it up, well done. Load has hopefully eased at hospital.'

Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and the Luton and Dunstable Hospital has made every effort to inform stakeholders and patients about the changes and communications have been distributed.

### **Scale of change**

The L&D move mostly affected patients in Dunstable and surrounding areas. It is anticipated that the Dunstable community service will see approximately 10,000 patients per annum and although this is a very small proportion of phlebotomy services across BCCG, which in total see around 240,000 patients, it was nevertheless essential to ensure patients were not disadvantaged by the L&D move which may have resulted in patients being less inclined to having necessary blood tests in a timely way.

## **Conclusion**

L&D continue to provide a specialist phlebotomy service on the main hospital site. The Arndale House service has been operational since 4<sup>th</sup> June 2018 and patient feedback is improving. The community based phlebotomy service started on 22 October 2018 and is providing a local, accessible service to patients in the Chiltern Vale area.

## **Supporting Documents**

N/A