

Agenda Item 4

		THE HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR LINCOLNSHIRE	
Boston Borough Council	East Lindsey District Council	City of Lincoln Council	Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council	South Holland District Council	South Kesteven District Council	West Lindsey District Council

Report to	Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire
Date:	17 May 2023
Subject:	Chairman's Supplementary Announcements

1. Membership of the Committee

Following the district council elections on 4 May 2023, there will be changes to the district council membership of the committee. Representation is due to be confirmed following the annual meetings of district councils, which are taking place between 16 and 24 May 2023. In addition, an appointment to the vacancy in the County Council's membership is due to be confirmed at its annual meeting on 19 May 2023. Training will be offered to all new members of the Committee.

2. Government Support for General Practice

On 9 May 2023, the Government announced support totalling £240 million to enable GP practices in England to improve their technology, for example, by replacing analogue phones with modern telephone systems and online tools to ensure patients get the care they need as soon as possible.

The Government states that this will mean that when patients contact their practice, they will know how their query will be managed, rather than being told to call back later. If their need is urgent, they will be assessed and given appointments on the same day. If it is not urgent, appointments should be offered within two weeks, or patients will be referred to NHS 111 or a local pharmacy.

There are also plans for receptionists to become expert 'care navigators', whose job it is to make sure patients are directed to the most suitable healthcare professional. There will be funding for 6,500 care navigator training places, in effect one member of staff per practice who can then pass on the training to colleagues. The Government has stated that successful care navigation can help direct 40% of requests more effectively and speed up appointments for those who need them.

Also on 9 May 2023, NHS England announced that by next winter patients will be able to get prescription medication for seven common conditions, including earache, sore throat or urinary tract infection, directly from a pharmacy. This will follow government investment of £645 million over two years to expand community pharmacy services. In addition, the NHS plans to offer 2.5 million people access blood pressure checks in their local pharmacy, an increase from 900,000 carried out last year.

The Committee is due to consider an update on GP services from both the NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board and the Lincolnshire Local Medical Committee at its next meeting on 14 June 2023, and it is suggested that any questions on these initiatives can be raised at that time.

3. Better Health - Every Mind Matters Campaign

As part of mental health awareness week (15 – 22 May), *Better Health – Every Mind Matters* from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) is launching a new campaign to encourage the nation to try to improve their mental health by getting active.

The Government states that research has indicated that three quarters of a sample of 2,000 adults in England surveyed reported feeling anxious, but fewer than half were aware that physical activity is proven to reduce symptoms of anxiety. In addition, 38 per cent of the adults surveyed reported trouble sleeping; 37 per cent reported feeling less confident; 35 per cent reported having less energy owing to anxiety; and 24 per cent reported that anxiety had stopped them from attending social events.

The Government also stated that physical activity releases feel good hormones and improves mental health but, according to the new research, less than half of adults are aware that it has been proven to reduce symptoms of anxiety (45 per cent), reduce stress (45 per cent) and distract from negative thoughts (42 per cent). Four in ten adults are not doing the NHS's recommended 150 minutes of physical activity per week.

The research also revealed that over a third (35 per cent) of adults tended to use distraction techniques to relieve feelings of anxiety, including watching TV (47 per cent), browsing the internet (36 per cent) or even isolating themselves from others (33 per cent). However, those who did regular physical activity reported that it helped to boost their mood (68 per cent), confidence (61 per cent) and relieve anxious feelings (61 per cent).

4. Community Diagnostic Centres – Announcement of New Centres

On 15 May 2023, the Department of Health and Social Care announced that a further six community diagnostic centres would open in England, bringing the overall total to 106. One of the six announced is likely to be of benefit to some Lincolnshire patients as it is due to be located in Scunthorpe town centre, and will offer up to 146,000 tests per year, including ultrasound checks, CT and MRI scans, as well as blood tests.

5. Covid-19 Vaccination – End of Offer of First and Second Doses

On 5 May 2023, the Government announced that the offer of a first or second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine would end on 30 June 2023 for those at lower risk of severe illness. To date around 40 million adults across England have already received both doses. This is part of a move towards a more targeted vaccination programme that prioritises those most at risk, in line with advice from the Government’s Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

The Government has added that this year’s spring booster programme continues with over two million people eligible for top-up doses. As part of this programme NHS vaccination teams have been visiting care homes across the country since 3 April, with eligible people living in the community receiving the vaccine since 17 April. The spring booster campaign will also end on 30 June.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation’s advice remains that the risk of serious illness with Covid-19 continues to be disproportionately greater in those from older age groups, residents in care homes for older adults, and persons with certain underlying health conditions. Should a person move into an at-risk group, the offer of a first or second dose will re-open with the seasonal booster programmes.

Also on 5 May 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a statement which acknowledged the uncertainties arising from the potential evolution of Covid-19, but that it was time to transition to the long-term management of Covid-19. The WHO determined that Covid-19 was now an established and ongoing health issue which no longer constituted a ‘public health emergency of international concern’.

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