

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(Health and Social Care)**



**PHLEBOTOMY
WORKING GROUP**

**FINAL REPORT
MARCH 2012**



Overview & Scrutiny

**‘Valuing
Improvement’**

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LEAD MEMBER'S INTRODUCTION

I am very pleased to introduce this Overview and Scrutiny (Health and Social Care) Phlebotomy Working Group report. Phlebotomy services, particularly in the South of the Borough were appalling, with lengthy waiting times. This was partly due to the fact that 'Drop-in' services at Aintree NHS Foundation Trust had ceased for routine bloods from GP referrals.

This report seeks to improve and inform Elected Members and Officers of the problems surrounding Phlebotomy Services through the Working Group's discussions, interviews and visits and the ensuing recommendations.

The recommendations are not heavily dependent on additional resources and we believe they are realistic and achievable. If these recommendations are accepted, the patients of both North and South Sefton will enjoy a much improved and more efficient service.

I wish to thank all those people who took part in interviews and facilitated visits and for giving up their valuable time to inform the Working Group. I am tremendously grateful to my fellow Working Group Members for their commitment to our citizens and for their ideas and contributions.

My final thanks go to Debbie Campbell, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, for her production of this report on a subject that was causing great concern to the citizens of Sefton Borough; and for her excellent organisation and for her considerable patience. I sincerely hope that this report will not be merely shelved, but that its recommendations are taken forward to enhance the lives of the citizens in our Borough.



Councillor Diane Roberts
Lead Member of the Phlebotomy Working Group
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
(Health and Social Care)

HISTORICAL POSITION

Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Health & Social Care) were first alerted to concerns regarding the phlebotomy service in 2010, particularly at the Litherland Town Hall (LTH) facility. Prior to August 2009, the service had operated as an “open access” service, not appointment based, which had worked well for a time. As demand increased during 2009, particularly during the summer months, this had caused a number of issues, as outlined below:-

- Patients would arrive very early in the morning before the centre was open to queue for a blood test – in all weathers.
- Once in the building patients were often unhappy waiting a considerable time for blood tests, sometimes for over an hour, and this included people who had decided to present for a “fasting blood test” – which meant they had not eaten since the night before.
- Over the summer of 2009 the entire phlebotomy service was scheduled to be uploaded to the CHS Sefton Community Information system (a national requirement for all services to be managed electronically). This involved capturing additional demographic information from each resident presenting for a blood test, and this was for any patient not yet known to the electronic system. This would obviously have increased the length of time for every patient queuing to receive a blood test in the “open access” session, which would further delay patients waiting for a blood test.
- Parking at the LTH facility became an issue. People were parking in such a way that other vehicles were unable to pass through to either exit. There were frequent parking issues and on several occasions, ambulances responding to urgent requests from the Walk-in Treatment Centre, could not access the relevant area to collect a patient.
- The fire service, when responding to an emergency call out to LTH, could not gain access to the rear of the centre (Field Lane access) after entering the site from the Hatton Hill Road entrance, due to cars parking against hedges, leaving only a narrow gap to allow other cars to pass.
- Patients attending normal GP or clinic appointments within LTH were complaining they could not park in the car park and were late as they had to find off road parking.
- Local residents from surrounding roads were complaining about cars parking in front of their homes and drives preventing them parking outside their own houses. Pavements around LTH are very narrow and cars were parking half on pavements and half on the road which caused great problems to local disabled residents and disabled patients attempting to access LTH. The police often had to respond to residents’ complaints and were having to attach notices to cars or issue parking tickets.



- Phlebotomists - two on duty at any one time using the allocated rooms for the phlebotomy service - were struggling to cope with the pressure from the workload. There was a lack of capacity in the centre to increase rooms to accommodate additional phlebotomists. This would have meant transferring phlebotomists from other sites, so exacerbating the parking situation by increasing open access capacity, and therefore demand.

In order to address these issues, an appointment system had been introduced which created a waiting time for the service. In addition, the introduction of additional services, requiring patients to receive blood tests as part of a programme, created additional pressures on the service and a number of complaints were made.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 7th June 2011, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Health & Social Care) considered its work programme for 2011/12 and the Chair requested that possibilities for working groups be considered at the next meeting. The following is an extract from Minute No. 20:-

RESOLVED: That

- (5) *possible topics for the establishment of working groups for 2011/12 be considered at the next meeting of this Committee.*

At its meeting on 26th July 2011, the Committee considered possible topics for working groups for 2011/12. The following is an extract from Minute No. 31:-

- (3) *the following working groups be established during 2011/12:-*

Working Group	Members
Carers	Councillors L. Cluskey, Page and Welsh;
Phlebotomy	Councillors Ball, Hubbard and Roberts.

The Committee also proposed that Councillor Roberts be the Lead Member for the Phlebotomy Working Group.

On 13th September 2011, the Committee discussed the prioritisation of its work topics for 2011/12, particularly in light of the resources available to it, and resolved as follows (Minute No. 42 refers):-

- (2) *work on the Phlebotomy Working Group be commenced as soon as practicable;*
- (3) *Councillor McGuire be appointed as a Member of the Phlebotomy Working Group;*



Details of Working Group meetings are as follows:-

Date	Activity
• 19 October 2011	Scoping & discussion of issues;
• 22 November 2011	Interview of witnesses from Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust;
• 6 December 2011	Interview of witnesses from Southport & Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust; and
• 14 February 2012	Determination of recommendations.

In addition, Working Group Members undertook site visits to community service sites, as follows:-

• 6 December 2011	Site visit to Netherton Health Centre, Magdalen Square, Netherton;
• 7 February 2012	Site visit to Formby Clinic, Philips Lane, Formby.

DEFINITION

Phlebotomy is the process of making an incision in a vein.

A phlebotomist is an individual who is trained to draw blood.

Blood samples have a wide range of uses and testing can be used as part of a wider diagnostic approach. Generally speaking, patients are seen by their GP who recommends a blood test in order to eliminate or confirm a particular diagnosis.

A blood test can be used to:-

- Assess a patient's general state of health;
- Confirm the presence of a bacterial or viral infection
- Ascertain how well certain organs, such as the liver and kidneys, are functioning.



SERVICES AVAILABLE WITHIN SEFTON

South Sefton

Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust delivers a variety of community health services, including phlebotomy, to a range of health centres and clinics within the communities of Liverpool and, since April 2011, in south Sefton.

Walk-in appointments are offered at the following 6 clinics, alongside book-able appointments:-

- Bootle Health Centre, Park Street, Bootle, L20 3RF
- Litherland Town Hall, Hatton Hill Road, Litherland, L21 9JN
- Maghull Health Centre, Westway, Maghull, L31 0DJ
- Netherton Health Centre, Magdalene Square, Netherton, L30 5SP
- Prince Street Clinic, Prince Street, Waterloo, L22 5PB
- Thornton Health Centre, Bretlands Road, Thornton, L23 1TQ

North Sefton

Southport & Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust delivers the phlebotomy service for patients in the north of the Borough through the Out-patients departments at Southport and Ormskirk Hospitals and through community clinics in North Sefton and Ormskirk (Hants Lane).

The Hospital clinic at Southport is for patients attending for out-patients appointments at the hospital, and for GP patients who have specific clinical problems. It is more appropriate for these patients to attend the hospital clinic and appointments are arranged for them with their GP.

The majority of patients accessing the service will be through one of the following 4 community clinics:-

- Ainsdale Centre for Health & Wellbeing, 164 Sandbrook Road, Ainsdale, Southport, PR8 3RJ
- Churchtown Community Clinic, 137A Cambridge Road, Churchtown, Southport, PR9 7LT
- Formby Clinic, Philips Lane, Formby, L37 4AY
- Southport Centre for Health & Wellbeing, 44-46 Hoghton Street, Southport, PR9 0PQ



KEY WITNESSES – SUMMARY OF STATEMENTS

The following points are a summary of the discussions held with key witness invited to Working Group meetings:-

Chief Executive, Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust

In October 2011, following an internal review and feedback from patients and commissioners, it was found that the waiting times in a number of sites had reached a 5 week high, in addition to a 20% DNA (Did Not Attend) rate.

The Clinic providing the service offered an appointment only service. Appointments were made and offered by contacting any of the clinics in the south of the Borough.

Following the internal review, an action plan, containing short, medium and long term objectives was put into place. Objectives included:-

Short Term

- Reduce waiting list to 48 hours by end of November 2011;
- Reduce DNA rates to 5% by end of November 2011;
- Single line management of services across Liverpool & Sefton;
- Improve quality & governance;
- Improve staff training & development.

Medium Term

- Work with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to establish a mix of drop-in & appointment clinics, embedded into the neighbourhood model by January 2012.

Medium/Longer Term

- Exploit information management technology (IM+T) solution to improve performance and release time;
- Standardise referral system using IM+T solution.

The key actions achieved recently included:-

- Additional clinics operational across Sefton services;
- Walk-in appointments being introduced alongside book-able appointments;
- Waiting times down by the week commencing 21/11/11 to:
 - 3 days on average for routine; &
 - 6 days for fasting;
- DNA (Did Not Attend) rate down to 7.5%
- Walk-in attendances at an average of 220 per week.

However, there was an acknowledgement that some problems remained at the Maghull Health Centre site where waiting times were at 13 days, and some challenges remained at this site.

Next steps included:-



- Continued working with CCGs to establish clinics & clinic times that met the needs of patients & CCGs;
- Consideration of issues around car parking for walk-in clinics;
- Consideration of options around neighbourhood centres in the future to meet the needs of the community;
- Introduction of single point of contact for all clinics;
- Introduction of mix of walk-in & appointment clinics;
- Receipt of feedback from patients, staff & commissioners to redesign the service for the needs of the community;
- Undertake a patient satisfaction survey.

Following on from the meeting between Members of the Working Group and the Chief Executive of Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust, the Trust was invited to submit an update on waiting times for phlebotomy services in time for this final report.

The update indicated that with the exception of the Maghull Health Centre, all other waiting times were now reduced to zero and that there had been a 15% increase in activity.

Problems remained at Maghull Health Centre with appointments but this was largely to do with room space rather than capacity and the Centre still offered the walk-in facility.

Pathology Services Manager, Southport & Ormskirk Hospitals NHS Trust

Since the transfer of the service to Integrated Care Organisation in April 2011, the service had been working hard to reduce the waiting times in each of the clinics for both routine and fasting bloods.

The average waiting time for fasting bloods by December 2011 was 4 days (range 3-5 days) and routine bloods 1.5 days (range 0 – 3 days).

The average waiting time for fasting bloods in December was 9.25 days (range 6-13 days) and routine bloods 5.75 days (range 3-10 days.) These times included weekends.

The laboratory service had identified that it received requests from between 1,800 – 1,900 patients per week. However this was nearly 1,000 more patients than there were available appointment slots when the service was operating at full capacity.

The service was also looking to identify, whether there was a pattern in the number of DNAs at different clinics and whether it could increase the number of slots for fasting tests utilising those of routine. The current situation was much improved compared to that inherited in April 2011. The service was **not** considering moving to "drop-ins" at the present stage.



Recent Service Improvements To Date

- Recruitment to vacancies and the utilisation of bank staff to backfill until the posts were filled.
- To maintain cover in times of holiday, training and sickness the service was actively recruiting to build up this bank of staff.
- Increase in the number of appointment slots by 316 per week via the shortening of appointment slot times from 11 minutes to 7 - these measures came into effect on 4th July 2011. This had provided an additional 10 appointment slots per session. The total number of appointment slots for both fasting and routine was 1,105. This was based on the department being fully staffed and all available slots being filled. On average 90% of capacity was used.
- Closer monitoring of booked appointments enabling staff to be deployed to the sessions and clinics with the biggest demand.
- Development of pathways to enable those patients who required an urgent appointment based on clinical need may be seen in the out-patient's department at Southport District General Hospital (DGH). This was on a named patient basis and could be arranged via the patients' medical Practitioner.
- Patients in the Maghull area were able to access services through the GP clinic at Ormskirk DGH. This operated as a walk-in clinic in the mornings Monday & Tuesday and Thursday & Friday. Alternatively, there was a community clinic at Hant's Lane in Ormskirk that operated in the morning Monday to Thursday by appointment. Maghull patients had been attending the out-patient's department at Ormskirk DGH in increasing numbers and this was beginning to impact on the waiting time there. However, it was understood that waiting times were now dropping at the Maghull clinic so the demand at Ormskirk DGH was decreasing.
- Patients requiring fasting bloods were given the option of attending another clinic with a shorter waiting time or given the option of taking up routine appointment slots which were run later in the day. However, some patients were very reluctant to travel to another clinic.

Recent Recommendations

Commissioners had agreed to fund an additional 2 phlebotomy posts until 2013. The service would use these posts to provide additional sessions at the Southport Centre for Health & Wellbeing site which was proving to be the most resilient in seeing a fall in waiting times. Once waiting times in all clinics had stabilised, initiatives would be looked at to develop the service further, such as additional venues or twilight clinics. Practice Managers would be consulted as to what form of service would best suit their patient groups.



As at 3rd February 2012, the next available appointment was as follows:-

Ainsdale HC	Fasting – 5 days Routine – 0
Churchtown Clinic	Fasting – 3 days Routine – 3 days
Formby Clinic	Fasting – 4 days Routine – 3 days
Southport HC	Fasting – 4 days Routine – 0 days

SITE VISITS – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Members observed the *Lorenzo* IT system in use at the community clinics visited.

At Netherton Health Centre, Liverpool Community Health and Sefton phlebotomy services had joined together as one team as from 3rd October 2011. The initial plan was to reduce Sefton's waiting times from 4 weeks to no waiting time by introducing walk-in sessions. This was an instant success as, at the time of the site visit, there was no waiting times. The staff had worked as a team and across boundaries.

KEY FINDINGS

During the course of the review, Members considered arrangements for phlebotomy services in neighbouring health authorities. Most of these operate on a walk-in basis and some hold “twilight” clinics in the evenings, which make it easier for people who work to attend for blood test.

Members also found that once the review commenced, the health providers concerned made great efforts, particularly in the south of the Borough, to reduce the waiting times for tests and waiting times were reduced dramatically by the conclusion of the review, although some difficulties remained at the Maghull Health Centre.

Once waiting times in all clinics had been stabilised by the end of the review, Members considered that initiatives could be made to develop the service further, such as the introduction of “twilight” or evening clinics, to make the service more accessible to people in employment.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

In producing this report on the Phlebotomy service, acknowledgements and thanks are attributed to the following individuals for their time and input:-

- ***Andrew Richardson, Pathology Services Manager, Southport & Ormskirk Hospitals NHS Trust***
- ***Bernie Cuthell, Chief Executive, Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust***
- ***John Foley, Service Manager, Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust***
- ***Melinda Pattenden, Phlebotomy Manager/Team Leader Clinical Services, Southport & Ormskirk Hospitals NHS Trust;***

Thanks must also go to the 3 Members of the Working Group who have worked hard and dedicated a great deal of time to this review, namely:-



***Councillor Diane Roberts
(Lead Member)***



Councillor Pat Ball



Councillor Bruce Hubbard



Councillor Sue McGuire



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust be congratulated for reducing the waiting times for phlebotomy services in the south of the Borough and the Council hopes that the improvements made will be sustained;
2. That Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust be advised that this Council still has concerns regarding the waiting times for phlebotomy services at Maghull Health Centre and hopes that the Trust will endeavour to address the problems with the service at that Health Centre;
3. That Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust be requested to consider the introduction of a “twilight” phlebotomy clinic, either on an appointment or on a walk-in basis, in the south of the Borough;
4. That Southport & Ormskirk Hospitals NHS Trust be congratulated for reducing the waiting times for phlebotomy services in the north of the Borough and the Council hopes that the improvements made will be sustained;
5. That Southport and Ormskirk Hospitals NHS Trust be requested to consider the introduction of “twilight” phlebotomy clinics, either on an appointment or on a walk-in basis, at both Formby Clinic and in the north of the Borough, either at the Southport Centre for Health and Wellbeing or at Southport and Formby District General Hospital.



Overview & Scrutiny



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