

# MAFHI/03/10

**Committee** Mid Area Forum - Health Inequalities Across Mid-Essex Scrutiny Task and Finish Group

**Date** 8 September 2010

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## **Braintree area overview**

Attached as Appendix A and Appendix B are two written reports of witness statements given recently to John Zammit, Area Co-ordinator commenting on health issues in the Braintree area.

- (a) Interview with Mr Steve Boulter, Resident of Gestingthorpe & Former Braintree District Councillor (Appendix A)
- (b) Interview with Mr David Rutledge, resident of Alphamstone and Chairman of Alphamstone & Lamarsh Parish Council (Appendix B)

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Interview with Mr Steve Boulter, Resident of Gestingthorpe & Former**

### **Braintree District Councillor**

**10<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

Mr Boulter was asked if there were any issues regarding access to health services in his area and his response was as follows:

Mr Boulter explained that the residents of Gestingthorpe and other villages in the area all use Hardwicke House, a GP surgery located in Sudbury town. This is a large GP practice which also has a small branch surgery sited near the bus station in Sudbury and two satellite surgeries located in Bures and Clare. All of these surgeries are in Suffolk and have Essex residents using them.

Hardwicke House has a dispensary but for those patients using the branch surgery near the bus station, a walk to the town shops is needed in order to obtain any medication required.

Access to appointments is now satisfactory as is the service for those patients needing repeat prescriptions. Formerly one had to give two days notice in writing for each repeat prescription but now there is a diary system where repeat prescriptions are made up on a certain date and if a patient goes to the dispensary at the right time, their medication is ready.

For those using public transport, a bus service runs from Gestingthorpe to Sudbury daily and hourly from seven am to seven pm. It is a hail and ride service and on the outward journey stops within two hundred metres of Hardwicke House. On the return journey however, the bus can go one of two ways and as no one knows which route it is going to take, patients who have visited the surgery have to walk to the bus station which is a quarter/half mile away. For people with mobility problems or mothers with young children, this is a long way to walk.

## **APPENDIX A cont..**

It would be helpful if bus drivers were instructed which route to take on the return journey and where to pick patients up so that everyone knows.

Mr Boulter also voiced concerns regarding Walnut Tree Hospital in Sudbury and West Suffolk Hospital in Bury St Edmunds.

Walnut Tree Hospital is also used by Essex residents for clinics and three years ago the hospital was threatened with closure. There was no consultation with Essex residents concerning the closure and although it is still open, residents are not aware of what the situation is around its closure or what clinics have since been moved.

Essex residents in the area receive large amounts of information from Mid Essex PCT about services that they don't use but nothing from the Suffolk PCT covering the area for services that they do use.

The West Suffolk Hospital at Bury St Edmunds is the natural 'default hospital' for those patients using the GP practice in Sudbury (most patients needing to be referred by their GP to a hospital would be referred there) and public transport links for Essex Residents are poor. The bus from Sudbury to Bury St Edmunds is slow and doesn't connect with the bus that takes Essex residents from Gestingthorpe and the surrounding villages to Sudbury which causes a further delay for residents needing to attend West Suffolk Hospital from Essex.

The car parking charges at West Suffolk Hospital are 'outrageous';

If one takes someone by car rather than the patient using hospital services they are penalised by being charged and if one is visiting a long stay patient e.g. in hospital for four weeks, the car parking charge for visiting is four pounds per day.

West Suffolk Hospital staff are friendly but the hygiene is poor where blood has been seen on the floor of the ward and patient trays are all wiped with the same cloth and then glasses put upside down on the trays. MRSA patients are put in side rooms which share some of the same facilities as the main wards (Mr Boulter did point out that the information concerning hygiene was three years old and there may now be improvements in this area).

## **APPENDIX A cont..**

Another concern is that when some patients are discharged from West Suffolk Hospital needing further care, there is difficulty in getting care arranged with Essex Social Care Direct as the hospital staff do not always talk to Social Care Direct. (This information has been checked since the interview with Mr Boulter and there is an issue around the concern Mr Boulter has, not only with West Suffolk Hospital but also other hospitals that Essex residents use that are located outside of Essex).

Lastly, Mr Boulter did have praise for the Ambulance Service which arrived within minutes of his call and correctly diagnosed the problem in thirty seconds.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview with Mr. David Rutledge, resident of Alphamstone and Chairman of Alphamstone & Lamarsh Parish Council.** **4th August 2010.**

Mr. Rutledge was asked if there were any issues regarding access to health services in this area and his response was as follows:

Mr. Rutledge explained that residents of Alphamstone, Lamarsh, Middleton, Twinstead and Bures mostly use the GP Surgery located in Church Square, Bures. Others use Surgeries in Halstead, Earls Colne and Sudbury.

The Bures Surgery/Dispensary, is a satellite of the large GP Practice at Hardwicke House in Sudbury, and is located on the Suffolk side of the River Colne, and therefore comes within the boundary of Babergh District Council.

It was stated that whilst Essex residents are satisfied with the service that the Bures surgery provides, there is a problem with parking. The surgery, along with pressure from the local populous, have managed to obtain two designated parking places (one for the Doctor, the other for the disabled) in an otherwise free parking area of the road. However, most of the remaining parking places are taken up on a daily basis by staff from the nearby Chambers bus company working on a shift system. This prohibits other people from parking near the surgery, or the Village Post Office next door, and quite frequently causes double parking.

One of the solutions to this problem would be for the staff of Chambers to utilise the area in Chambers bus station/garage vacated by the buses, a suggestion put to the management in a letter by Mr. Rutledge, and to which he did not receive the courtesy of a reply.

Mr. Tony Shelton, the District Councillor on Braintree District Council for the Essex area, made contact with his opposite number on Babergh District Council, and together approached Suffolk Police with the suggestion that a one hour parking ban be put in place to coincide with the one hour lunchtime closing of both the Post office and the Surgery/Dispensary. This would stop Chambers staff from obstructing parking by the users of these services. The Police responded by claiming they could not monitor the ban.

It is important to have parking available because many residents using the surgery are older people who have mobility problems, and mothers with children who need to park near the surgery. There is parking available at the Bures Village Hall, some two hundred yards away, but as this is opposite to a Primary School, spaces are often taken up by parents and staff of the school.

## **APPENDIX B cont...**

Mr. Rutledge also stated that he had canvassed local opinion regarding whether a satellite GP Surgery was needed in the village for perhaps one/two days a week and the response had been that this was not needed, but that it would be more beneficial to have more home visits from GP's, as currently a patient has to be seriously ill before a Doctor will visit.

He advised that there was an emergency volunteer car service operating in the Village, undertaken on a rota system