



Norfolk & Waveney Local Medical Committee

Representing all GPs in Norfolk, Gt Yarmouth & Waveney

Dr Paul Watson
Regional Director
NHS England

5th March 2019

Norfolk Community Eating Disorder Service

Dear Paul

We wish to raise an issue with you regarding the significant inadequacies of the Norfolk Community Eating Disorder Service (NCEDS) run by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, which are impacting on patients' safety and general practitioners' in Norfolk (excluding Great Yarmouth).

The service notified Norfolk commissioners in the late Spring 2018 that they were experiencing critical difficulties with a deficit in the recruitment of trained CBTE therapists and were putting normal recruitment processes in place to address this.

According to the commissioners the situation as at 3rd January 2019 was:

- 27 patients awaiting assessment – approximate average wait 60 days
- 55 patients awaiting treatment – approximate average wait 25 weeks from referral and treatment process can take between 16 and 40 weeks
- 91 in patients in treatment
- 10 patients being managed in the community that NHSE acknowledge require specialist in-patient beds but there are none available nationally

The service waiting times for assessment and treatment have become extreme because of the staffing shortage and therefore the decision was made in November to raise the threshold of the service. This decision passes the workload and responsibility to manage these vulnerable patients to General Practitioners and is risking them working over and above their levels of competency. It also results in General Practitioners being unable to achieve the requirements of the Locally Commissioned Service (LCS) for Eating Disorder Medical Monitoring that they may have signed up to. This is due to this LCS requiring an assessment be made by the community eating disorder service to confirm the patient is suitable for monitoring in general practice and a plan has been received by the GP detailing the monitoring requirements. These requirements are based on NICE guidance and ensure GPs are not taking on inappropriate patients and risk. GP' being unable to provide this Locally Commissioned Service is further affecting the health provision to this cohort of patients.

The shortcomings in the local eating disorders service have been made prevalent in local and national media due to the deaths of two girls, with specific acknowledgement made by clinicians and the deceased' families to the lack of appropriate service provision and support made available to these vulnerable patients correlating with the outcome.

We have been in dialogue with the CCGs regarding all of the LMC's concerns (letters are attached to the email), but have not to date been reassured that a sustainable and safe solution has been found. Commissioners via Clive Rennie, Assistant Director Integrated Commissioning, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities, have advised that they have regular contracting and quality monitoring meetings with CPFT/NCEDS at which progress has been tracked and state that all efforts are being undertaken to address the current workforce shortages and to put alternative provision in place, however the situation as it is currently is putting GPs in an insidious position and there is a clear risk to patient safety. There needs to be a robust specialist service in place to support the provision of care General Practice can provide to these patients.

Having discussed these serious concerns at our February committee meeting, the LMC Executive were instructed to escalate this as a matter of urgency to NHS England, hence this letter, in order for NHS England to investigate this matter and support the local CCGs to ensure the critical issue of patient safety is appropriately and adequately addressed, in line with the content of this letter.

Yours sincerely



Dr Ian Hume
Medical Director