Single Point of Access in Fife

Background

**Dunfermline and West Fife**
Since 2003 the Primary Care Emergency Service (PCES) which is now managed by the Dunfermline and West Fife CHP has managed the GP and Primary Care out of hours service.

In 2004-2005, Fife Council Social Work Department and Dunfermline and West Fife CHP initially worked jointly to create a point of access for community teams (PACT) to streamline referrals to rehabilitation services for the most vulnerable elderly in their area by reorganising secretarial staff to receive referrals and to forward them to the services most suited to deal with the patient’s problems.

**Glenrothes and NE Fife CHP**
Since 2003 the Community Dental Services which are now managed within Glenrothes and NE Fife CHP have provided a 24/7 Dental Helpline which covers Fife and several other health board areas.

In 2006-2007, the need to similarly access services rapidly in other areas of Fife led to discussion within the Glenrothes and NE Fife CHP to set up a service which would ultimately allow GPs (and Acute providers) access to all services through a single phone number or through an e-referral. This was seen as being pivotal in proving services responsive to the Long Term Conditions plans for anticipatory care and later access to services to support the “Living and Dying Well” strategy. Funding was obtained allowing the service to be set up and an Occupational Therapist involved in Glenrothes and NE Fife intermediate services managed the process of setting up referral criteria and an office base.

However, it was recognised from a very early stage that to allow the service to work efficiently a review of intermediate services in Glenrothes and NE Fife was required. As many as 16 health services were identified as providing intermediate services. Unfortunately there was no coordination of these services so that a referrer could not be aware of whether a service was able to access and manage a patient rapidly and there was no cross cover of services for sickness or holidays. These factors lead to delays and patients being admitted to hospital.

In 2009, a project manager was appointed to review intermediate services and produce a project plan by November 2009.

**Social Work Department**
Fife Council have a range of out of hours emergency services including social worker.

In 2006 NHS Fife and Fife Council jointly developed a 24/7 falls service to pick uninjured people from the floor based around the Mobile Emergency Carers (MECs) service.

**East Fife Social Work**
In 2009, a review of day time responses to calls to social work to contact older people’s services in East Fife indicated that at any time seven social workers in different offices in that area could be taking calls and that this could cause confusion and delay to users trying to contact services. A call
centre was set up manned by call handlers who could also deal with some of the simpler enquiries and 2 social workers to deal with more complex issues.

In 2009, Fife Council appointed a manager reporting directly to the Director of Social Work to look at greater use of call centre services to improve access to services and efficiency.

**Fife Operating Division**

**Centralised Telephones and Admission Managers**

In 2008-2009, NHS Fife telephone services were centralised retaining local numbers. In the two acute hospitals admission coordinators were introduced as part of the bed management plans to take calls from GPs wishing to admit patients.

**Central Referral Unit (CRU)**

In 2008-2009, NHS Operating Division introduced a central referral unit to handle referrals from GPs of patients with possible cancer. After a patient with possible cancer is seen by a GP the patient is given a leaflet indicating that they have to telephone the CRU two working days later to obtain an appointment for review and investigation. Fife is one of only two areas in Scotland to have achieved this service.

**Future Developments**

All of these systems are up and running with variable degrees of success. However, each has been introduced in response to local need or national strategy by local managers without any overarching joint Fife strategy. A group of interested managers from Fife Council, NHS Fife Public Health, the Operating Division and the CHPs is meeting in October to set up a short life working group to develop a joint strategy which could be included in the Older People’s Commissioning Strategy and a development plan aimed at providing

- Uniform access to services across Fife
- Efficiency in managing calls to services
- Greater coordination between services
- Greater direct access to community services (via Single Shared Assessment)
- Easier access to services for public and health and social care professionals

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