



ACUTE SERVICES PROGRAMME

Review of Proposals for Monklands A&E

Focus Groups and Interviews with New Consultant Appointments

August 2007

DRAFT REPORT FOR NHS LANARKSHIRE

September 2007

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APPENDIX

1. Focus Group Memo

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 NHS Lanarkshire enjoyed increased success with consultant recruitment during 2006/007 and it is thought that this is in part due to the configuration, as set out within A Picture of Health, of larger clinical teams with their emergency work focussed on two emergency sites and a separate site focussed on planned care.
- 1.2 In June 2007 the Cabinet Secretary requested a review of A Picture of Health proposals in relation to A& E services at Monklands. One of the risks identified of potentially retaining a full emergency hospital including A&E for Monklands was the continuation of small clinical teams and therefore limitations being placed on consultants' ability to sub specialise.
- 1.3 In order to explore the recent success in consultant appointments and the impacts of the Cabinet Secretary's decision, confidential focus groups and a one-to-one telephone interview exercise was undertaken by an independent organisation with newly appointed consultants and specialist registrars.
- 1.4 A Picture of Health was a factor in the decision by a few doctors to take up a post in NHS Lanarkshire, but for many of the consultants interviewed the ability to sub specialise in larger clinical teams was not seen as a benefit early on in their career and stated that they chose to work in NHS Lanarkshire because it offered opportunities to develop services and to generalise.
- 1.5 The in-ability to sub specialise was seen as a potential barrier to long term consultant retention and this would have to be overcome by focussing on strengthening factors that would continue to make posts attractive.
- 1.6 The view amongst newly appointed consultants and specialist registrars is that the uncertainties engendered by the Cabinet Secretary's decision on Monklands A&E will cause the greatest impact on consultant recruitment and retention rather than the specifics of any consequent changes to plans for acute services configuration. Respondents indicated that as long as the current instability and uncertainty continues NHS Lanarkshire's ability to recruit and retain consultants across all specialities will be affected.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Prior to 2006/07 NHS Lanarkshire experienced ongoing difficulty with consultant recruitment. It was identified that a contributory factor could be an acute services configuration that meant consultants working in a small district general hospital model. The view was that this model would not enable consultants to sub specialise and as a result would make taking up a post within the organisation less desirable.
- 2.2 During 2006/07 there has been increased success with consultant recruitment and it is thought that this is in part due to the configuration, as set out within A Picture of Health, of larger clinical teams with their emergency work focussed on two emergency sites and a separate site focussed on planned care. Another contributory factor was thought to be the new Directorate structure which operates across the three hospitals.
- 2.3 In June 2007 the Cabinet Secretary requested a review of A Picture of Health proposals in relation to A& E services at Monklands. As part of the review NHS Lanarkshire will be considering a range of models for Monklands A&E.
- 2.4 One of the risks of retaining full emergency services including consultant-led A&E for Monklands was seen as the continuation of small clinical teams and therefore limitations being placed on consultants' ability to sub specialise. This may ultimately impact on NHS Lanarkshire's ability to recruit and retain consultants into the future

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The need for confidential focus groups and a one-to-one telephone interview exercise with twenty-seven newly recruited consultants and fourteen specialist registrars was identified, in order to explore whether the recent success in consultant appointments had been facilitated by A Picture of Health proposals on acute hospitals configuration.
- 3.2 This work was undertaken by an independent organisation in order to maintain confidentiality and provide an unbiased report that is truly representative of the views expressed. The view was also that the focus group work would be seen as more robust by participants, if undertaken by an outside organisation.
- 3.3 Although four focus groups were set up these were reduced to two as just over a quarter of consultants confirmed their attendance. Fortunately many of the consultants who could not attend the focus groups took part in the telephone interviews. This enabled over fifty percent of consultants to give input into the report.
- 3.4 The areas covered and key questions asked during both the focus groups and one-to-one telephone interviews where as follows:
 - What were your reasons for taking up a post in NHS Lanarkshire?
 - Was the configuration of Acute Services planned within A Picture of Health a contributory factor and why?
 - What do you think the impact will be on consultant recruitment of the Cabinet Secretary's decision on Monklands A & E?

- What configuration of Acute Services is more attractive for you to work in and why?
- Are there any other factors that will affect consultant recruitment and retention?

These key questions were then further explored by means of relevant follow up questions and the findings are summarised in Section 4. (See overleaf).

4. FINDINGS

4.1 The reasons given by consultants for taking up a post in NHS Lanarkshire :

- The bulk of respondents, across all specialities, chose to work in NHS Lanarkshire because the post on offer was seen to suite their skill set and provided the right variety of generalised exposure, with scope to develop. Those that chose to accept a position in Lanarkshire over positions offered to them in Glasgow spoke of the fact that in many specialities (e.g. Pathology, Haematology etc.) NHS Glasgow was pursuing a strategy of sub specialising, where as NHS Lanarkshire allowed junior consultants the opportunity to generalise.
- Respondents saw their respective specialities as expanding and developing within NHS Lanarkshire and felt that they could be involved in building and shaping them.
- Those who had previously lived and trained in Scotland, spoke of their decision being based on considerations like, the need to retain child care networks, not having to live too far from their families or force their partners to change jobs.
- Those who had trained and lived in England spoke of the smaller size of the NHS in Scotland and therefore its friendliness and approachability as contributory factors. They also perceived that the Scottish NHS embodied more of the original ethos of the NHS system than currently is the case in England. The controversy around the advertising of junior doctor posts and the difficulty of obtaining posts in some specialities in England was also mentioned.
- Respondents who had previously worked or trained in NHS Lanarkshire spoke of the good relationships they had developed with their teams and their colleagues as being a primary factor in their decision to take up a full-time post.

4.2 The contribution made to consultant recruitment by the configuration of Acute Services planned within A Picture of Health:

- The view amongst many was that A Picture of Health did not go far enough in its recommendations, and was very much against best practice. The general consensus was that one Level 3 Acute Service positioned in the middle of Lanarkshire would have been preferable in terms of patient care and sub specialisation. The perception is that the A Picture of Health was influenced by local and national politics and existing infrastructure commitments.
- Less than a third of the respondents felt that the plan outlined in A Picture of Health was a factor in their decision making. Most believed that the positive aspects of the plan were not “sold enough” by recruiters.
- For most the view was that the recommendations in A Picture of Health affected every speciality in subtly different ways but that working as a coherent department with the support of colleagues, management and the Directorate was more of a factor in their decision making than any specific configuration of hospital sites. In fact for some specialities e.g. Anaesthetics, the recommendations in A Picture of Health were viewed as potentially negative.

- The new Directorate structure operating across all three hospitals was not seen as a contributory factor in improving consultant recruitment.
- Stability and consistency in decision making were seen as more important to service delivery than any one acute configuration. This was seen as enabling departments to plan and develop services in an efficient and effective manner.
- The consensus view was that the ongoing instability and lack of clear direction around acute service configuration posed a greater risk to both consultant recruitment and retention than any one configuration option.

4.3 The impact on consultant recruitment of the Cabinet Secretary's decision on Monklands A&E

- The biggest impact on consultant recruitment of the Cabinet Secretary's decision and the potential changes to plans for acute services configuration was seen as being the instability that this is causing in the minds of candidates for recruitment. The view is that regardless of the acute services configuration chosen this must be made clear so that candidates are able to weigh up their options with all of the facts being made available to them. A Picture of Health provided a clear and for some, a compelling vision of the future and this was seen as its primary contribution to recruitment and retention.
- The potential impact of the continuation of small teams and limitations on the ability to sub specialise was seen by most as affecting retention more than recruitment. It was felt that the impact of this could however be averted if other factors were emphasised, such as the collegiate nature of NHS Lanarkshire, selling the positives of generalisation and the potential of achieving better information technology links than NHS Glasgow within the next two years.
- Respondents frequently commented that the greatest impact of the Acute Services site location would be on the retention of experienced technical, nursing and support staff rather than on junior consultant recruitment and retention.

4.4 The configuration of Acute Services new consultants would find more attractive to work in.

The unanimous response was that consultants would ideally prefer the establishment of one large teaching hospital in the centre of Lanarkshire whilst maintaining some level of service in the other outlying units. The view was that this would utilise time and money more advantageously, prove better for sub specialisation and provided that adequate transport networks were in place, would ultimately benefit patient care.

Neither the plan as outlined in A Picture of Health or the Cabinet Secretary's decision and its possible impacts on service configuration with Monklands being a full level 3 A&E were viewed as appropriate ways to proceed.

However when asked this question most of the consultants interviewed over the telephone spoke more about other factors they would find attractive, rather than the configuration of acute services. These included the existence of longstanding dialogue between clinicians and management, no high turnover rates among nurse managers, low burn-out rates amongst junior doctors and stability within the system enabling consultants to plan and structure services accordingly.

4.5 Other factors affecting recruitment and retention

- The key factor mentioned as having a positive impact on consultant recruitment was the reputation of individuals in the various departments as perceived by new consultants.
- Other factors identified were:
 - the fabric of the buildings at Wishaw and Hairmyres
 - the collegiate feeling in Lanarkshire
 - the close proximity and communication with Glasgow
 - the perception of the level of team work and the treatment of new consultants as equals
- Factors that if improved within NHS Lanarkshire could positively affect recruitment and retention included:
 - Improvement in the perception of the level of dialogue between clinicians and management. This is needed to overcome the perception that the focus on the achievement of targets is jeopardising junior doctors training.
 - Active representation on Post Graduate Committees to ensure that there is sufficient trainee through-put in Lanarkshire.
 - Ensuring medical students have a positive experience of working in NHS Lanarkshire.
 - The creation of attractive education pathways for consultants which could include funding for outside study and the attendance of conferences.
 - Ensuring that job plans take into account the annual leave or study leave of colleagues.
 - The improvement of child care facilities.
 - The ability to sell the benefits of either sub specialisation and or generalisation.
 - Selling the benefits of meeting the unmet needs of the population e.g. ageing, deprivation etc.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The consultants interviewed at both the focus groups and over the telephone pointed to the current instability and lack of clear direction around acute service configuration as posing a greater risk to both consultant recruitment and retention than any one configuration option. The view is that the Cabinet Secretary's decision on Monklands A&E will in and of itself cause uncertainty amongst consultants and candidates for recruitment rather than the specifics of any consequent changes to plans for acute services configuration. Respondents indicated that as long as the current instability and uncertainty continues, NHS Lanarkshire's ability to recruit and retain consultants across all specialities will be affected.

5.2 The majority of respondents did not feel that the plan as outlined in A Picture of Health was a factor in their decision to take up a post in NHS Lanarkshire. Most believed that the positive aspects of the plan were not made clear to them at recruitment. For many of the consultants interviewed the ability to sub specialise in larger clinical teams was not seen as a benefit and stated that they chose Lanarkshire because it offered opportunities to develop services and to generalise.

Respondents who had trained outside of Scotland spoke of the difficulty in obtaining posts in some specialities in England. Those who had trained in Scotland spoke of personal factors around family and geography affecting their decision.

Those that were influenced in their decision to accept a post in NHS Lanarkshire by A Picture of Health spoke more of the document providing a clear vision of the future, against which they were able to clearly assess and match their current career aspirations.

5.3 The in-ability to sub specialise in larger clinical teams was however seen as a potential barrier to long term consultant retention but that this it was felt could be overcome by focussing on strengthening other factors that could ensure that consultant posts continued to be attractive, namely:

- Strengthening the collegiate atmosphere within NHS Lanarkshire
- Improving the negative perception around the level of dialogue between clinicians and management
- Creating attractive education pathways for consultants which could include funding for outside study and the attendance of conferences.
- Ensuring that job plans take into account the annual leave or study leave of colleagues.
- Improving child care facilities.
- Ensuring that the planned information technology links are in place within the next two years

5.4 The recommendation was for NHS Lanarkshire to make rapid progress towards considering a range of service models for Monklands A&E, obtaining executive sign-off on an option and implementing it seamlessly before the current climate makes any further impact on morale and begins to adversely affect consultant recruitment and retention.

(Appendix 1)

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To: Please see distribution list
From: Pamela Milliken, Head of Acute Services Programme
Date: 9 July 2007
Re: Focus Groups

I am writing to invite you to attend a focus group to obtain your views about what attracted you to come and work in Lanarkshire.

NHS Lanarkshire is reviewing the configuration of its acute services. One of the main reasons for change identified was the need to have a configuration of acute services that is attractive for consultant recruitment and retention. The purpose of the focus groups is to gain information from consultants recruited over the last 18 months about their reasons for choosing to work in NHS Lanarkshire, so that this can be fed into our strategic planning.

The focus groups will be independently facilitated. During discussions, which should take about 1½ hours, you will be asked your views on what attracted you to work in Lanarkshire and what configuration of acute services you think is more attractive to work in and why. A report of the focus groups will be compiled and you will receive a copy.

We are very keen to gain your views so three focus group have been set up in order to maximize attendance. **Please could you identify any of the focus groups you could attend and we will then balance the numbers and send you a confirmation.**

In order for this work to be representative, we would like to hear from all newly recruited consultants. Hence, if you cannot make a focus group, we would welcome the opportunity to telephone you to get your views to feed into the overall report.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Pam Milliken
Head of Acute Services Programme

Please return this reply slip to Margaret Kelter and contact her if you have any queries.
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