

Summary report of the Cross Border Network meeting on 8 February 2016

Introduction

1. The NHS Cross Border Network supports closer working between the NHS in England and the NHS in Wales for the benefit of patients along the border.
2. The Cross Border Network met in Birmingham on 8 February 2016.
3. This report presents a summary of the discussions which took place at the February meeting.

Update from the implementation task and finish group

4. The project Implementation Task & Finish (IT&F) group, which has membership from LHBs, CCGs and GPs on both sides of the border, provided proposed timeframes for the test phase of the referral assessment service (RAS) project.
5. The referral assessment service (RAS) project is being tested to ensure that approximately 21,000 English patients registered with Welsh GP practices are directed into secondary care services commissioned by their respective CCGs, should they so choose. This will give assurance to the Welsh Minister for Health and Social Services of the new arrangements, prior to them being formally implemented.
6. It was confirmed that the RAS would be processing secondary care referrals for urgent and routine care, in line with current operations.
7. IT&F project team members visited a number of practice representatives to discuss the test phase and the communications plan for the project.
8. Some practices are keen to be involved in further discussions about the test phase and further meetings will be held with GPs to progress these discussions.
9. A representative from the General Practitioners Committee Wales (GPC Wales) was present and advised the network that GPC Wales wanted to be included in the project as the formal sign-off body representing Welsh GPs.
10. The project team explained that a number of dependencies, such as the installation of Welsh Clinical Communications Gateway (WCCG), will need to be carefully managed, and weekly meetings will take place with WCG to prepare for the test phase.
11. The Cross Border Network agreed that it was imperative to have sufficient practices included in the test phase, as well as representation from all local health boards (LHBs).

12. It was confirmed that the Welsh minister had agreed for NHS Wales to work with NHS England to ensure there is a successful test phase.
13. Wider issues regarding the financial implications of the referral of patients back into the English secondary care system were raised and there are ongoing discussions between the Welsh Government (WG) and the Department of Health (DH) in relation to this.
14. It was confirmed that arrangements for community services will remain unchanged through the test phase.

Update from the communications task and finish group

15. The Communications Task and Finish group (CT&F) provided an update on proposed timescales for communications to English resident/Welsh registered patients.
16. An evaluation of patients' and GPs' experiences of the new arrangements was also discussed. Patients' feedback will be captured via a paper-based survey which will be sent to them with their appointment letter.
17. GPs will also be surveyed to capture their experience and feedback.
18. The feedback from patients and GPs will be collated in an engagement and experience report.

Managing waiting list transfer

19. The network discussed the process for managing patients who will be on waiting lists in Wales at the commencement of the new arrangements.
20. The clinically appropriate timeframes for treatment will be of primary concern.
21. Consideration will also be given to managing patients already in the system during the test phase.
22. The network agreed that further work is required to fully understand the scope of the issue, including the number of patients affected and the responsibility of the GPs, LHBs and CCGs.
23. It was agreed that the policy position of the DH on the issue of waiting list transfers would be determined and further action taken, dependant on their view.

Electronic communication between Wales and England

24. The accessibility of electronic patient data between England and Wales was discussed.
25. The network agreed that cross border information technology and communications (IT&C) would be a standing agenda item, in order to gain further insight into issues arising from data sharing between England and Wales.
26. A draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Welsh and English informatics services is currently under development and will be shared with the network in due course.

Future of cross border protocol

27. The network discussed the future of the cross border protocol.
28. There was agreement to work towards a new arrangement to reflect the joint collaborative working between England and Wales, and to safeguard the quality of services for cross border patients.
29. Work will commence on establishing this new arrangement and an outline draft will be tabled at the next meeting.
30. The network discussed the 'Who Pays?' guidance for England and 'Responsible Commissioner' guidance for Wales.
31. It was agreed that these documents should outline the role of local authorities.

Policy differences log

32. The network agreed formal ownership of the policy differences log.
33. It was agreed that the document would be a working document to be reviewed at each network meeting.
34. It was proposed that the policy differences log be annexed to any revised cross border arrangements.

Transfer of commissioning arrangements to local authorities in England

35. The recent transfer of responsibility for some services from the NHS in England to local authorities has meant that these services are now based on residency, rather than GP-registration. Examples of these services include the health visiting service for children aged 0-5, public health screening services and sexual health services.

36. The network also agreed that further discussion about public health screening and mental health services would be helpful to the network.
37. It was agreed that a local authority representative should attend the Cross Border Network in order to have sight of the issues being raised and to escalate as appropriate.
38. The network agreed that the local government authority (LGA) would be a useful first point of contact to take these discussions forward.

Healthwatch representative

39. The network reiterated the value of patient experience and feedback on the various cross border issues, but also the role of patient representative groups on the network in disseminating information through their networks.

Next meeting

40. The next meeting of the NHS Cross Border Network will take place on Monday, 9 May 2016.