

Sussex Patient Transport Service Update

12 May 2016

The Sussex Patient Transport Service (PTS) managed by Coperforma is continuing to experience operational difficulties which are impacting on service delivery and patient experience.

Difficulties are being experienced in the booking function, with patients and NHS staff not always able to access the service's phone lines in a timely way, and transport provision, with patients not being picked up within agreed timeframes and demand exceeding capacity.

High Weald Lewes Havens (HWLH) Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), as coordinating commissioner for the PTS, is working closely with Coperforma, the other Sussex CCGs and hospitals to address these issues and enact remedial action and business continuity plans.

Actions being taken to improve performance and patient experience

- A Programme Board is overseeing and monitoring the service's performance, risks and operational issues. The Board's membership includes senior commissioning leads from all the Sussex CCGs, Coperforma's operational lead and CEO.
- A Remedial Action Plan (RAP) has been developed jointly between HWLH CCG, on behalf of the seven Sussex CCGs, and Coperforma Ltd. This is the first step of the formal contract monitoring process CCGs must follow under the terms of the standard NHS contract in response to a breach of contract by a service or provider.

The RAP sets out:

- actions required and which party is responsible for completion of each action;
- improvements in outcomes and other key indicators required;
- the date by which an action or improvement is to be achieved;
- consequences for any party failing to achieve/maintain the improvement required.

HWLH CCG and Coperforma Ltd are holding weekly Remedial Action Plan Review (RAPR) meetings as the forum for formally recording progress and developments under the agreed RAP.

- Regular contract monitoring meetings, led by the region's Commissioning Support Unit (CSU), will also start this month and will include quality, performance and finance contract reports.



- Specific remedial action plans are also being developed with individual hospitals to address individual site and/or area specific issues.
- Coperforma is also currently:
 - recruiting and training additional call-handling and booking staff;
 - sourcing additional vehicles from transport providers;
 - administering further training and logins for healthcare professionals across Sussex to use the online PTS booking system;
 - conducting an internal review of usage of the service's mobile app by transport crews in order to identify any additional staff training needs.

Independent investigation

HWLH CCG, on behalf of all seven Sussex CCGs, has commissioned an enquiry into the transition and mobilisation of the PTS contract from South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECAMB) to Coperforma which is being supported by all organisations (CCGs, Coperforma and SECAMB).

It has commissioned TIAA, an independent company and one of the leading providers of assurance services to the public sector, to carry out the enquiry and has asked for a draft report to be available for review by mid-June.

Background to data, IT and workforce issues

Data

A significant amount of the data transferred to Coperforma's booking system prior to 1 April was incomplete and this has resulted in transport crews being provided with incomplete addresses, patient details and requirements, and has contributed to missed appointments, cancellations and late pick-ups.

Coperforma has allocated additional resources for 'data cleaning' of patient information, with those patients requiring regular transport (e.g. for dialysis and oncology treatments) being prioritised. A dedicated team is phoning all such patients direct to confirm or re-confirm their details whilst the data on hospital and clinic addresses is also being corrected and updated as a matter of urgency, as some of the transferred information on these addresses was also incomplete.



IT

Management and coordination of Coperforma's PTS is based on technology and software that responds in real time to changes in demand and circumstances which means that changes can be made to bookings in real time if circumstances change.

For the system to work optimally, it requires healthcare staff to use the system to book journeys on behalf of patients, and for all crews providing transport to accept journey jobs, and to tell the system when those jobs are complete, so that another job can be allocated.

All crews have been supplied with hand-held computers and phones so they can use the services's Mobile Worker Application (App).

Unfortunately, in the first month of the service many journeys were booked and organised outside of the core online system. This meant that many bookings, the journeys made and the final outcomes (on time and completion) were not recorded on the system.

As more NHS staff are registered onto and use the system - and as more crews become ever more competent in using it - more journey information will be recorded and an exact picture of timeliness of PTS journeys will be captured.

A concentrated education and support plan has been initiated earlier than anticipated by Coperforma in order to register more NHS staff within hospitals across Sussex to use the online system.

Workforce

Journey bookings and patient enquiries are dealt with by staff at Coperforma's Demand Centres in Eastbourne in East Sussex, Durrington near Worthing in West Sussex and Thrupton in Hampshire.

The Thames Ambulance Group and ambulance provider VM Langfords provide the transport for Coperforma's Sussex PTS. The service also uses a variety of other transport providers, including specialist ambulance and wheelchair-accessible vehicle providers, and voluntary and community providers who are available 'on tap' to meet fluctuating demand.

Staff from previous PTS providers, the Patient Transport Bureau and South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Trust, have transferred to Coperforma under TUPE arrangements. However, far fewer staff transferred under TUPE arrangements than was expected. To combat this, a comprehensive recruitment drive has been initiated by Coperforma, together with a training regime to bring crew levels up to expected numbers.

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