DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-0156, 26 June 2018

Provision of healthcare on English islands

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Summary

On 27 June 2018, there will be a debate entitled "Provision of healthcare on English islands". This will be led by Mr Bob Seely MP and will take place in Westminster Hall at 9.30am.

Contents

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1. Background

The challenges faced in the provision of NHS services to inhabitants of English islands vary significantly depending on the geography and population of the islands. Larger islands connected to the English mainland by road and rail, such as Portsea Island in Hampshire and Canvey Island in Essex, are well integrated into the healthcare services of the surrounding area, whereas smaller islands accessible only by sea and air, such the Isles of Scilly and Holy Island (which is inaccessible by road during high tide) can face challenges providing some services, particularly in emergency situations.

Most island populations are served by NHS organisations based on the English mainland, with the exception of the Isle of Wight, which has its own hospital trust, ambulance service and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

In addition to geographical challenges, island populations can also face specific demographic issues, such as an older age profile. This was raised by Isle of Wight MP Bob Seely during a January 2018 debate on local government funding:

> Health model funding calculations for over 80-year-olds arguably are seen as inadequate, because of the complex health and adult social care needs of people when they hit 80 and get into their ninth and 10th decades. The Island has more 80-plus residents than the national average, and that has a significant impact on our adult social care costs.[1]

1.1 Urgent and emergency care

Many islands will not have their own medical facilities for providing emergency care due to small populations, and may face challenges providing timely urgent and emergency care.

For islands with road access, ambulances are still able to reach patients from the English mainland. Those without 24/7 road access (for example, at high tide) have developed a number of local approaches to improve urgent and emergency support.

Island communities are often served by volunteer community first responders, who can reach patients faster and provide emergency first aid before full ambulance support arrives. 2017 saw the launch of a first responders group on Holy Island,[2] supported by the North East Ambulance Service, and the purchase of additional equipment for Mersea Island first responders, who are trained by the East of England Ambulance Service.[3]

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1   HC Deb 16 January 2018, c274WH
2   North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, *First responders launched on Holy Island*, March 2017
3   East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust, *Second responder kit allows volunteers to help more people in Essex community*, August 2017

Air ambulances can also be made available for transporting and treating patients in locations that ambulances cannot access. In general, air ambulances are not fully funded by the NHS due to the high cost of the service, but the NHS does provide funding for the clinical staff on board. Most of the funding for air ambulances comes from charitable donations.

More populated islands are able to offer their own ambulance service. The Isles of Scilly has five ambulance all-terrain vehicles, one for each of the inhabited islands, as well as the only ambulance boat in England, which can transport patients to a 24/7 minor injuries unit on St Mary's, or to the English mainland.[4] The Isle of Wight has its own ambulance service, provided by the integrated hospital, community mental health and ambulance trust (the only such integrated trust in England), which can transport patients to the A&E department on the island.

1.2 Transport costs for hospital appointments

Due to the small populations of many English islands, many treatments, particularly for more specialised procedures or conditions, need to take place in hospitals on the English mainland.

The cost to patients of transport to the mainland, which is not routinely covered by the NHS, is an issue felt particularly acutely by some island populations.

The NHS Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS) provides funding for travel costs for patients going to secondary hospital referrals, who are in receipt of certain qualifying benefits or are on the NHS low income scheme. Special rules are also in place for all residents of the Isles of Scilly, who are eligible for travel to the English mainland for a payment of £5. However, local stakeholders on the Isles have noted that other transport costs can still be very high for residents, in part because this does not cover their costs to hospital, only to Land's End:

> Healthwatch director, Jane Hurd, said that while patients receive a £5 concessionary fare on Skybus, they still have to pay considerable amounts to get from Land's End to Treliske Hospital.
>
> And that's even worse for off-islanders, who often need to book a special boat to get them to St Mary's.
>
> Manager for Adult Social Services, Gareth Peters, said the situation was worse for St Martin's residents recently when one of the medical travel providers decided they didn't want to renew their contract.
>
> The Council had to step in to organise alternatives.
>
> But Cllr Christine Savill asked why the authority had to do this when it was the responsibility of the NHS to provide travel to medical appointments.[5]

Arrangements are in place on the Isle of Wight where three ferry providers will offer discounted fares to patients travelling for hospital

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[4]   South Western Ambulance Service, *Isles of Scilly Welcome Stroke of Luck Paramedic Couples*, June 2017
[5]   'Councillors Question Cost of NHS Medical Travel', *Scilly Today*, 30 October 2015

appointments. There is also a free shuttle bus for cancer patients travelling to Portsmouth or Southampton hospitals. More information can be found on the Isle of Wight CCG page, Travelling for Healthcare.

1.3 Service reconfiguration

Service reconfiguration in the NHS is currently being planned through 44 Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) areas. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight STP has looked at some of the issues facing the Isle of Wight, including frequent transport to the English mainland for treatment, and difficulty in attracting and developing staff. Some of the proposals agreed for the future of the NHS in the area include:

- In future, acute services will be delivered on Island first wherever clinically appropriate and local residents will only have to travel to receive services when it is essential to do so.

- Around 90% of current hospital activity would be retained on the Island

- More joint working for the Island's NHS staff with colleagues in NHS services with mainland hospitals will ensure patients receive the best possible care, and staff are able to retain and extend their clinical skills

- Some of the more seriously ill patients requiring more complex, urgent specialist treatment would be transferred to the mainland to improve quality of care for patients

- However, fewer patients would travel to the mainland overall, as more routine planned care would be provided on the Island and follow-up appointments undertaken face-face or with the aid of technology on the Island. At a conservative estimate, this would reduce the overall number of patient journeys to the mainland by approximately 500 each year.[6]

Developments in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly STP area are also looking at developing and improving care that can be delivered closer to home, to reduce the need to transport to the mainland:

> On the Isles of Scilly, work is progressing towards joining up the health and social care provision to make the best use of the resources. There is a daily 'multi-disciplinary team meeting', and a 'clinical forum' through which patients and their carers can contribute suggestions that improve the care they receive. The Isles of Scilly travel project is aiming to deliver service improvements for Isles of Scilly patients, reducing the need for medical travel to the mainland by providing more outpatient activity on the Isles; thereby reducing travel costs.[7]

More information on STPs can be found in the Commons Library briefing paper, *Sustainability and transformation plans and partnerships*

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[6]   My Life a Full Life, A new care model for hospital services to be recommended for the Island
[7]   Kernow CCG, South Kerrier and Isles of Scilly GP locality

2. Further reading

2.1 Articles

- 'Healthcare bosses quizzed about the future of services on the Isle of Wight', *Isle of Wight County Press*, 12 June 2018

- 'New health partnership could see commissioning powers lost to the mainland', *Isle of Wight County Press*, 23 May 2018

- 'City hospital could face rise in specialist care cases from other hospitals', *Southern Daily Echo*, 3 February 2018

- 'Isle of Wight MP chairs new Parliamentary Group on UK Islands', *On the Wight*, 30 August 2017

- East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust, *Second responder kit allows volunteers to help more people in Essex community*, August 2017

- South Western Ambulance Service, *Isles of Scilly Welcome Stroke of Luck Paramedic Couples*, June 2017

- North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, *First responders launched on Holy Island*, March 2017

- 'Councillors Question Cost of NHS Medical Travel', *Scilly Today*, 30 October 2015

2.2 Academic

- Impact of physical separation from the UK mainland on Isle of Wight public service delivery, University of Portsmouth, 2016

- Problems of providing health care in British island communities, Social Science and Medicine, Volume 50, Issues 7–8, 1 April 2000, Pages 1081-1090

2.3 Publications

- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Sustainability and Transformation Plan, November 2016

- Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Sustainability and Transformation Plan, October 2016

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