

South Edinburgh Health Forum

Annual Report 2009

1. Introduction

Our second year has been just as busy as our first. Our membership has expanded to include a member of the Muslim community, and further members with extensive experience of health services: one a retired doctor, another a consultant in international health. We have also made contact with some young people with a view to studying their needs. We continue to meet monthly, and have had a full agenda.

2. Membership of Healthcare Groups

We continue to be represented on the Co-ordinating Group of the South Edinburgh PPF, the Community Service Development Sub-Group of the Stroke Managed Clinical Network, the CHP and REAS Control of Infection Committee, the Patient Reference Group for the Department of Clinical Neuroscience Reprovision, the Steering Committee of the Third International Stroke Trial (based in Edinburgh), and VOCAL (Voice of Carers Across Lothian).

One member has arranged for the SEHF to have group membership of the Scottish Network of Alcohol Practices for the Young (SNAPY). Members are also subscribers to many on-line health and other associated information services, databases and e-mail lists in the local, national and international arenas.

One member has joined the Lothian Diabetes Representative Group and the Podiatry Managed Clinical Network, and another sits on the TRAK Project Board. One member contributes to the Consumer Network of the International Cochrane Collaboration, in both the Breast Cancer Group and the Stroke Group, and also the UK Health Technology Assessment programme as a consumer reviewer of research proposals.

We have been joined by the Chair of Transition Edinburgh South, which is particularly concerned with healthy food, opportunities for growing food locally, and the impact of gardening on mental and physical health. Another member represents the Women's Environmental Network Scotland, which is also concerned with the impact of the environment on health.

3. Publications

Publications have included a letter on cancer care in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* (Goodare Heather. Cancer care. *JRSM* 2009; **102**: 172), and by the same author, an article in the IST-3 Times (the newsletter of the International Stroke Trial 3) in November 2009 with the title 'Is there a bottle in your fridge?' (about the Safelink emergency scheme).

4. Membership of Community Councils

We continue to have representatives of community councils among our members: Fairmilehead, Merchiston, Morningside, Tollcross, and a newly formed council, Juniper Green. Two councillors are members of Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership, one being the elected Chair of the Health and Employment sub-group. Others are regular attendees at Neighbourhood Partnership meetings, especially the South Central.

5. Meetings of the Group

The group has met regularly each month, except for August, though there were instead two meetings in July. Attendance has been good, with an average of 6.6 members at each meeting, and discussions have been lively. We were privileged to have a very interesting talk from Chris McGregor, Vice-Convener of Alzheimer Scotland and Board Member of Alzheimer Disease International, about some of the local issues with people suffering from dementia. Another welcome visitor was Sarah Sinclair, Head of PFPI, NHS Lothian, who came to discuss with us the NHS consultation on 'Involving People' and hear our views.

6. Scottish Government and Other Consultations

The group has again spent considerable time and effort in responding to consultations on matters of health. Helen Ogg has co-ordinated, edited, and submitted all but one of our agreed responses. These have been as follows:

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| January 2009 | Patients' Rights |
| April 2009 | Framework for action on alcohol |
| May 2009 | NHS Lothian Maternity Services Strategy |
| May 2009 | NHS Lothian: Involving People: Improving the People's Experience of Care |
| June 2009 | General Practice in Scotland: the Way Ahead |
| August 2009 | Better Diabetes Care |
| September 2009 | Scottish Ambulance Service |
| November 2009 | The Healthcare Quality Strategy for Scotland |
| February 2010 | Living and Dying Well in Lothian |

7. Attendance at Conferences and Meetings

During the year members have attended the following meetings:

A City for All Ages Advisory Group meetings
Alcohol Focus Group Conference in Glasgow
All Our Futures – Empowering Older People (Scottish Government and City of Edinburgh Council)
Cochrane Collaboration: 14th annual two-day meeting of UK and Ireland contributors held at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

Care of the Elderly (Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh)
Lothian Health Board Annual Review: at which several questions put by members were answered by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing
Patient and Carer Diabetes Education and Information Day (Napier University)
Patient Information Conference: Getting Better Together (meeting in Glasgow organized by the Scottish Health Council)
Safe in our Hands: Improving the Quality of the Patient Experience (Napier University)
Scotland Against Cancer (meeting in Glasgow organized by Cancer Research UK), at which a member asked a question of the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, which was reported in the press
Scottish Health Council AGM (by invitation)
Scottish Older People's Assembly at the Scottish Parliament: at which an interview took place with one of our members for BBC radio and television news
Seminar on Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods
Stroke Services in South Edinburgh

8. Other topics

a) Counselling

During the year the topic of counselling has arisen several times, and it became clear that the need for talking therapies in Edinburgh was not being met satisfactorily. Building on previous work by the North Edinburgh PPF, the group submitted a paper drafted by a member who is a retired counsellor to the Chair and General Manager of the Community Health Partnership. This was well received, resulted in a face-to-face discussion, and we hope will contribute to the improvement and availability of counselling services, at a time when there has been increased personal stress for many owing to the current economic climate. The important point was made that counselling should be cost-effective for the NHS if it reduced the expenditure on psycho-active drugs, which tended to mask the underlying issues and were not a long-term solution to many problems.

b) Mental Health Support

One of our members has continued to interact and offer support and advice to service users at Cambridge Street House, who at present are finding current Lothian Health Board proposals to move their 'special' Mental Health Support and Facilities to the new Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre extremely difficult to accept and deal with. At present this interaction is proving to be helpful, and it is therefore hoped to include patients who agree to have the chance to voice their concerns by inviting them to join the SEHF.

c) Personal, Social and Health Education

In an effort to analyse the problems underlying current issues around under-age alcoholism, drug use, and teenage pregnancy, a focus group of young people has been identified and it is planned to seek their advice on the extent to which they feel that existing programmes of health education meet their needs.

d) Minority Communities

During the year we have made contact with local communities, in particular Muslims, and have identified problems where culturally inappropriate care has been offered to vulnerable patients. We hope to work on this issue in the coming year, with the help of our Muslim colleagues.

9. Website

The website may be accessed at www.south-edinburgh-health-forum.org.uk and contains minutes, other useful health information and links to relevant external sites.

10. Conclusion

We have enjoyed our discussions over the past year, and plan to continue our work in the coming year, which seems to be filling a gap not covered by other groups or agencies. We continue to be disappointed that the South Edinburgh PPF has still not been reinstated, two years after it was suspended by the CHP, so that we are the only group offering the citizens of South Edinburgh a forum in which they can raise matters of general concern in relation to health, especially in relation to primary care.

New members are welcome, and can contact South Edinburgh Health Forum at: SEHF@south-edinburgh-health-forum.org.uk or through our website: www.south-edinburgh-health-forum.org.uk

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