

Brampton and District 50+ Forum

Report of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 March 2015 in Brampton Community Centre. 13 members were present for lunch and 19 members attended the meeting.

The Chair, Jean Taylor, welcomed members and introduced Sarah Morley of the North West Ambulance Service.

Sarah's presentation was to increase awareness of the recent changes to the Patient Transport Service (PTS). Not so long ago if you needed transport to and from a hospital appointment you would just ring up and book it. Now there is an eligibility test and the requirement criteria of 'physical or medical need' are more strictly applied. A 'difficulty with parking' or 'can't walk from the car-park' are not valid reasons for getting transport. A series of questions is now asked when a patient asks for transport and this has resulted in complaints. Sarah admitted that some of these questions needed refining and stressed that when requesting transport your answers should give a true indication of your mobility. You are eligible for transport in both directions if the treatment will result in impaired mobility.

Questions included: How much notice is needed? Up to 3pm the previous day and though the telephone service is not available over the weekend, if only short notice of an appointment has been given, they will try to accommodate you.

Can you take a carer? Yes, if a carer is needed at the appointment, e.g. for vulnerable patients; the extra place has to be booked.

What about rural residents? There is a web-site (www.nwas.nhs.uk) or you can ring up for advice about rural transport providers. There is a scheme which operates with voluntary drivers. If you are on low income there is the 'NHS travel' scheme; you have to pay up front but can claim back what you have spent.

Sarah also talked about 'Team 999', another awareness scheme. Calling 999 doesn't necessarily mean you need to be taken to A&E. The medically-trained person answering the 999 call will assess the best treatment. Sometimes this will result in a paramedic being dispatched, sometimes a first responder in the local community. It is hoped this will allow ambulances to be free for the most urgent cases and also reduce the hold-ups at A&E departments. No-one at the meeting was sure whether or not there was a first responder group in Brampton.

There is a problem if ambulances are waiting to pass on patients to an A&E department and that department is full. We were advised to call 111 not 999 for non-urgent help. 111 can provide a directory of services - medical advice, pharmacy opening times. A decision is being made this week whether the ambulance service is to take over the 111 service.

There is good integration with neighbouring ambulance services, e.g. North East and Scotland and, for an incident near a border, an ambulance from either service might be used.

The Chair thanked Sarah for addressing the meeting and answering questions.

Ann Oswin then gave some updates and news of forthcoming events:

- Extra-care housing development on the site. This begins on 23 March. Some areas on the site will have limited access and parking will be an issue.
- The café will open Monday - Friday for breakfast and lunch hoping to attract the custom of the builders on-site. The café will employ a chef and 2 assistants. At the next Forum the café will provide the food so the arrangements will not be the same.
- Cumbria Action for Health has a meeting next Friday. 'Health and well-being forums' is on the agenda; Ann will find out how this affects Brampton.
- Age UK National Rally. This is about the general election. It is being held in London on 24th March and will include MPs of the major parties. Even though lunch and transport is provided there was no mention of support for overnight accommodation which would make attending the rally from Cumbria a more feasible proposition.

The meeting ended with tea and biscuits.

The **next Forum** is on **Tuesday 14 April 2015**; the **AGM** is on **Tuesday 19 May 2015**.