



## NEWSLETTER, JANUARY 2018.

### *A Happy New Year to all our members and supporters.*

In November we had a successful “double whammy” meeting. **Kathryn Magson, CEO of Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group (HVCCG)**, spoke on the Group’s achievements, difficulties and plans. **Ian Armytage, the Group’s lead on urgent care**, spoke on the NHS’s introduction of **Urgent Treatment Centres** and the implications for St Albans & Harpenden. There were lots of questions and much discussion.

In December we held a very enjoyable **Xmas “get-together”** and were joined by members of our equivalent groups in Hemel, Hertsmere and Watford.

**Our next meeting is from 7.00 to 9.00 p.m. on Wednesday 31 January in Committee Room 1 of the District Council Offices, Civic Centre, St. Peter’s Street, St. Albans.**

On that occasion **our AGM** will be followed by a talk by **Helen Brown of the West Herts Hospitals NHS Trust (WHHT)**. The Trust runs Watford General, Hemel Hospital and St. Albans City Hospital (SACH). Helen will up-date us on the Trust’s plans for SACH.

#### **1. WHHT and SACH Hospitals.**

In order to set the scene for Helen’s talk, I write the following, hopefully accurately. A brand-new hospital providing all services on a single traffic-free green-field site convenient for everyone in West Herts sounds attractive, but even if such a site could be found there isn’t enough money available. In addition, that option implies the closure of SACH, so St. Albans and nearby residents would have to travel further to benefit from the services that SACH currently provides close to their homes.

WHHT’s Annual Report for 2016/17 states that WHHT **intends to keep A&E and specialised services at Watford** (page 3) and **“strengthen the role of St. Albans as a site for planned care”** (page 4). The Report states that “St. Albans is our **elective care centre** – which is pre-arranged, non-emergency care.” The services offered include:

- Ante-natal and community midwifery
- Out patients
- Minor Injuries Unit
- Elective and day surgery
- Clinical support; including, X-ray, ultrasound, mammography, phlebotomy, etc.

In recent months the “Herts Advertiser” has published letters from a St. Albans resident attacking WHHT’s plans to redevelop Watford General, and advocating an A&E and specialist hospital on a new but unidentified site, and he is now supported by a Hemel resident, but neither of them has supported

SACH. I do support the Trust's plans to preserve and strengthen SACH. As I wrote above, on 31 January Helen will up-date us on the Trust's plans for SACH.

## 2. URGENT TREATMENT CENTRES.

Health Warning! Please take a deep breath and prepare to grapple with a complicated topic. **Urgent treatment** is provided in several ways:

- **A&E** (e.g. at Watford General),
- **Urgent Care Centres** (e.g. the UCC at Hemel Hospital),
- **Minor Injuries Units** (e.g. the MIU at SACH),
- **NHS 111**,
- **out-of- hours GP** services.

There are problems. Between 12% and 15% of people attending A&E do so as a side effect of heavy drinking. Some people call an ambulance for spurious reasons: "The Times" (4 January) reported cases of households calling 999 on more than 1000 occasions a year. Other people call ambulances for clinical and medical conditions that are trivial.

Lots of people are confused by the system. Early in 2017 the HVCCG found that 81% of people going to UCC's and 90% going to MIU's could have been treated by a GP or a nurse at a surgery, or by phoning NHS 111 or an out-of-hours service, or by being advised by a pharmacist.

The NHS plans to take the pressure off A&E and to ensure that people are treated in the most appropriate way, as quickly and as close to their home as possible.

- **By simplifying and integrating.** UCC's and MIU's will be replaced by Urgent Treatment Centres. UTC's will be GP led, staffed by nurses, open for 12 hours a day, on 7 days a week. They will provide simple and speedy testing and diagnosis. Booking should be possible by phoning NHS 111, an ambulance, a surgery or out-of-hours. There will be a walk-in service.
- **By educating the public** (and, perhaps, some medical personnel) about the distinction between emergency care (life threatening and serious, e.g. stroke, broken leg) and urgent care (not life-threatening, e.g. cuts, broken finger), so advising and guiding them to the most suitable source of treatment.

### What are the implications for West Herts and St. Albans?

HVCCG has converted Hemel Hospital's **UCC into a UTC**. Several years ago "Your Care Your Future" proposed to up-grade SACH's MIU into a UCC. In 2015 Anne Main, MP for St. Albans, was told that that would happen. **However, it is not clear if HVCCG will provide a UTC at SACH.**

Hemel and St. Albans have about the same population, but although the Hemel UTC is busy very few people attend the MIU at SACH. Kathryn and Ian told us that the weekly average is about 25. I have been told that the MIU is so quiet that the staff have nicknamed it "The Library".

Such low attendance implies that it is not financially viable for the HVCCG to provide a UTC at SACH.

### Why is SACH's MIU so little used?

- Perhaps **not many people know about it**, or are unsure about its opening hours?
- Perhaps when people phone **NHS 111 they are not advised** to seek treatment there?

- Perhaps more people would go there if it were up-graded to a UTC?

Kathryn and Ian agreed that the SAPG could enter into a partnership with the HVCCG **to discuss the type of urgent care needed in St. Albans**. Please send me your views on these three questions. I will then collate them (anonymised) and make a case to the HVCCG's Urgent Care Working Party.

Our March meeting will be on the **HCCG's plans for urgent care**. We will be addressed by **Dr. Richard Pile**, a St. Albans GP, who is a member of the Working Party.

### 3. SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

- **Wednesday 10 January. 7.30 p.m. The Library, Verulam Wing, Hemel Hospital.**  
The Decorum Patients' Group Presents **"Connect: Private Provision of MSK in West Herts"**.  
Speakers: Faye Connell, of Connect, and Dr. Jon Hykin, a Hemel GP.  
I'm told that there will be parking space in the staff carpark near the Children's Outpatient Department, but that you should put a notice in your car stating why it is there!  
(As my November Newsletter noted, In recent months some patients have expressed concerns that the HVCCG has given contracts to private providers of medical services. Connect is a private firm and has been given a contract to provide muscular-skeletal services throughout West Herts.)
- **Monday 15 January. 7.00-8.15 p.m. Marlborough Road Methodist Church, St. Albans AL1 3XG.**  
St. Albans Liberal Democrats present **"The NHS at 70"**.  
Speakers include Dr. Clare Gerada, former Chair of the Royal College of GP's, and Norman Lamb MP. To book a free ticket contact [organiser@stalbanlibdems.org.uk](mailto:organiser@stalbanlibdems.org.uk) or phone 01727-855523.
- **Monday 5 February. 10.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m. Stanborough Centre, St. Albans Road, Watford.**  
HVCCG presents a **Development Day**.  
Speakers will include Paul Devlin, CEO of the National Association for Patient Participation, and Ian Armytage, the HVCCG's lead on urgent care.  
There is parking on-site and a buffet lunch will be provided. To sign up contact the HVCCG via [Heather.aylward@hertsvalleys.nhs.ccg](mailto:Heather.aylward@hertsvalleys.nhs.ccg) phone 01442-89885.

### 4. AND FINALLY....PLEASE

- Visit our own SAPG website <http://www.sapg.org.uk/home-page>
- Send me your views and experiences **re urgent care**.
- **Pass this Newsletter** to your friends and colleagues, and especially to members of GP Practice Patient Participation Groups
- **Don't forget our 31 January Meeting do come along to it!**

Best wishes,

*John Wigley*. (Chair SAPG.)

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5<sup>th</sup> January 2018.