

## Report on Lincolnshire Health Scrutiny Committee

13.04.2022

Councillor Calum Watt

Meeting recording and papers:

<https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MIId=6171&Ver=4>

### Summary

Health Scrutiny opened with a strident call for a “truly national health” service. The clear wish of those present was for all these different Trusts to stop “pinching” staff from one another and for there to be a national programme of training for specialist nurses, particularly those working in mental health. Needless to say I was happy to associated myself with these remarks.

I questioned the representatives of Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust (the principal Trust in charge of mental health services in Lincolnshire) on the reasons they believe Lincoln had the highest suicide rate in the country last year, and why so many people seeking help from mental health services in Lincolnshire often feel ignored until their condition is at its most critical. Further, there is confusion as to who someone who is suffering from mental health difficulties should speak to.

LPFT replied that many suicide cases are not known to mental health services, but that they hope the new Community Transformation Fund (which LPFT is carrying out as a part of a pilot with 11 other Trusts) might help to identify vulnerable people more quickly and would bring services into greater coherence.

Erring on the side of optimism, I encouraged LPFT to work more closely with the City Council and with the Safeguarding lead on this new scheme. However, the independent member – Dr Wookey, while expressing his hope the scheme would work – pointed out that there have been “3 or 4” attempts at creating greater cohesion between services in the past and that they often follow the same pattern: a successful pilot, followed by a gradual return the present, less organised state of affairs.

The suicide rate in Lincoln really is a disgrace and it would be worth greater investigation to discover the reasons why we are such an outlier. At the end of the meeting a working group considering the problem of suicide (in the county) was formed. I was deeply regretful that as a substitute member I was not able to join it. Certainly, it would be useful for us as the City where the rate is highest to have some input into any strategy which might emerge out of this Committee for dealing suicide here.

Dr Sharrack, representing the Lincolnshire Local Medical Committee (the statutory organisation which represents GPs in Lincolnshire), presented the Access to General Practice Report he called for an end to “negativity” towards GPs in the wake of the pandemic. He presented quite bleak picture of GP provision in Lincolnshire, which is clearly suffering from low recruitment. Several members accused Dr Sharrock of spreading negativity himself and were harsh in their criticism of GPs; blaming them for making it “impossible” to get an appointment during the pandemic in particular. Dr Sharrock said this was caused by the failure of the government to provide GPs with sufficient financial compensation to relocate to more isolated areas, for example, along the east coast, although some benefits had been discovered as it was more efficient to speak to patients over the phone and thus more people had been “seen” by this method.

The meeting concluded with a vote on the questions to be included on a public consultation regarding the concentration of nuclear medicine (e.g. radiology) at either Lincoln AND Boston hospitals (ULHT), or just Lincoln. The justification is – once again – a lack of staff, but the Committee was unanimous in

voting for a statement rejecting the presupposition in the consultation paper that these were the only two options and that continuing to have nuclear medicine provided at Grantham Hospital was not being considered.