

THORNHILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL.

Community Hospitals Update ---- January 2012.

Dumfries & Galloway Health Board has formed a Joint working partnership Board with Dumfries and Galloway Council , with a view to greater integration of both NHS and Social care services. This is a Scottish Government initiative, and has funding of 2.5 million in Dumfries and Galloway, spread over the next five years. As a region, we face a huge increase in the elderly population in the next decades, with a large decrease in the working age population, and it can be seen that closer working between partner organisations, and also, the third sector and voluntary groups, should at least, produce a more streamlined and efficient approach to care.

In taking forward the responses from the “Public Consultation” this “Joint Change Programme Board” (2011 -2016) has produced the “ Putting you First” initiative. They will use “Pathfinder” or” Tests of Change” to develop and test new ways of providing “Care nearer home” across all areas of the region, both urban and rural. The Board intends to internally evaluate these projects.

Since the last time of writing, in mid Summer 2011, we have continued to talk with contacts in both Moffat and Langholm, who continue to monitor changes at their Community Hospitals.

In conjunction with concerned individuals from the Moffat area, we formed the “Keep Watch Over our Community Hospitals” group , with Mrs Alis Balance as Chair. Meetings have been held in both communities, and in Dumfries.

Langholm Community Council, along with their District Councillors, have engaged in talks with members of the Change Programme Board’s “Putting you First “ Strategic Development Team, and we understand that they do not wish at the present time to participate with our proposed Independent review.

Concerns in Moffat and Thornhill however remain, as changes in emphasis in the way health care is to be delivered are brought forward. It is highly likely that changes in one location will be transferred to another. In November, Moffat Community Council found out through their local Undertaker, that the Mortuary at Moffat Hospital was to close, to make way for a base for /

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for Community Nursing Teams. The closure was originally to be effective from year end, but this has been postponed until March, after questions were asked in the local press.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that there has already been reductions in In-patient bed occupancy in our Community Hospital, while occupancy in Allenbank in Dumfries, is being gradually improved by D &G NHS's Geriatrician working more closely there.(Allenbank is a privately owned facility. The figures for Allenbank were obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, from D&G NHS) .

In last summer's letter, after it had become obvious the Health Board had no intention of completing the suspended consultation process, on the "Options" in Nithsdale, we suggested one way ahead could be to commission an independent and experienced expert in Community Health Care, to give us a view on;

- 1.The situation for our Community Hospitals at present; and
- 2.The way that services COULD possibly be developed to give our Community Hospitals a brighter, and sustainable part of the integrated pathway of health care within our rural communities.

We now consider that it is ESSENTIAL that a line is drawn as to the current position, before more change or gentle, erosion takes place.

The lady suggested was Helen Tucker, who has been involved with service and hospital development in Nairn; and also in the North Cumbria NHS Trust rural community hospitals review, where these facilities have gone from being under threat of closure, to now being seen as integral to the overall integrated delivery of Health Services.

Because of the aforementioned reasons, we have now engaged Helen Tucker to carry out the initial stages of an independent study.

During the last six weeks, we have had meetings with both Mrs Judith Proctor, Head of the Joint Programme for Change Board, and also with Mr Jeff Ace the current Chief Operating Officer, and in-coming, Chief Executive of NHS /.

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NHS Dumfries & Galloway, and some other senior personnel. Meetings with Health Board have always been an honest and frank exchange of views and perspectives, but these more recent meetings have been much more cordial, and positive for everyone. We would hope that this heralds a much better relationship, and more can be built on these, stronger foundations.

We have intimated to them, our intention to commission Helen Tucker to give us an independent view. This suggestion has been accepted, and hope that this will be seen by all of us in a positive way.

If we are to demonstrate the need for our local In-patient facilities to Helen Tucker, we need;

1. Your community to participate in the forthcoming, and very imminent opportunity to talk to Her. There will be only One chance, to talk to her in person for the general Mid and Upper Nithsdale Area. She will be visiting Thornhill Hospital on Wednesday 1st of February 2012.

It is our intention to hold an Open or Public Meeting in the Evening for her to collect you views on how important the provision of the hospital is. In particular we would appeal to those who have had experience of the facility in the past, either personally or for a family member, both in terms of care, and accessibility for the elderly and their families. Helen Tucker also needs to have an appreciation of the large rural area Thornhill Hospital serves. It would be useful to have representatives from as wide an area as possible. You or members of the public from your area, need to participate. We wish to give her a positive view of what has been achieved in the past, and what our aspirations could be for the future. Please ,try to send a delegate or two.

The meeting will be at 7.30pm on 1st February 2012, at Thornhill Community Centre.

There will also be the opportunity to come to a discussion prior to the Main meeting with Helen Tucker, for anyone who wishes to discuss and be updated on the current situation..... This will at Thornhill Friendship Club on Wednesday 25 th January 2012..... . 7.30 to 9.00pm .

We appreciate this very is short notice, but is due to circumstances beyond our control.

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2. Commissioning this report as indicated previously, has financial implications. At present the situation is that we have had a few generous private donations, and a underwriter has advanced sufficient money to secure only the first stage of the study. We do need much more money to secure the overall report. The total cost will be as indicated around £2,500-£3,000 per community. We don't currently have this, and would ask you as a Community Council to consider contributing to fund raising. We do not ask for a specific figure, it is up to yourselves, and how important you think this issue is to your community. We would maybe respectfully suggest that you could be a route to advertising and collecting donations from private individuals, who would wish to see the facility continue.

We must re-iterate , the fact that as this report is to be written by an INDEPENDANT and well respected academic, the outcome for ANY facility is then opens up the opportunity to be given some vision on how services could be developed.

We wish this to be seen as a part of a positive dialogue, involving all vested interests, to promote a wider discussion on finding the best possible and sustainable solutions for us all, while recognising the financial constraints.

Finally, but importantly, D& G NHS is currently conducting a consultation over the proposed New Infirmary, and it's LOCATION. Five sites have been shortlisted. The location of the new Infirmary will have an important bearing on how easily we all access its services. It is well recognised the problem in accessing the current site, for us in the north, in crossing the town. It is very important you indicate your views on the choice of site, we do not want to have a new facility built on the EXISTING site!!!!

Dates for NHS Consultation Events in Mid and Upper Nithsdale area are as advertised on the D&G NHS Website and are;

Thornhill Hospital Rehabilitation Unit Wednesday 7th March 2012

5.00 pm to 7pm.

Sanquhar Town Hall.....Wednesday 21st March 2012... 5.00pm to 7.00pm

