

Night health team home visit plan

A new approach to the provision of overnight healthcare services is being proposed in Angus.

The new service called See and Treat is a joint approach by the Angus Community Health Partnership (CHP) and the Scottish Ambulance Service.

It would see a paramedic and a minor illness and injury nurse practitioner working together to provide a mobile home visiting service between 10pm-8am.

If successful it could operate across Tayside.

The See And Treat team would be first on the scene to treat some patients calling the 999 service or NHS 24 for some conditions that are not life-threatening.

For example the team could treat patients who have mild to moderate breathing problems, care for many kinds of wounds and give advice to parents and treat childhood fevers.

By combining the advanced skills of these health professionals a wide range of illnesses and physical injuries could be diagnosed and treated in the patient's own home.

The usual 999 ambulance calls for life-threatening cases would continue unchanged and the minor injuries units in the burghs would continue to be open from 8am-10pm.

"We are fully committed to a 24/7 service," said Susan Wilson, general manager of the CHP.

"This is an alternative service between 10pm and 8am to better meet patient requirements in non-life-threatening cases, particularly for vulnerable older people and young families. The usual 999 ambulance calls in life-threatening cases will remain unchanged."

Data collected by the Scottish Ambulance Service and the Angus Community Health Partnership indicates there is an average demand across the Brechin, Forfar and Montrose areas of eight patients per night either seeking assistance at Minor Illness and Injury Units (MIUs) or calling the Scottish Ambulance Service for non-life-threatening care.

The team would cover Montrose, Brechin and Forfar in the first instance.

This means patients, who can be treated at home would no longer have to make their own way to the MIUs at night and this service would also reduce

the number of Angus patients being transferred to Ninewells accident and emergency department.

If urgent hospital treatment was required the See and Treat service would arrange admission to hospital.

The Scottish Ambulance Service would provide and drive the rapid response vehicle for the service that would be fitted out with the same lifesaving equipment as a normal ambulance.

This vehicle would be in addition to the ambulances already stationed at Forfar, Brechin and Montrose.

"Providing a mobile response unit will greatly improve the level of service to patients. Treatment in the home, where possible, has been particularly welcomed by those dealing with more vulnerable patients as it avoids disruption and possible disorientation that a hospital admission can bring," added Mrs. Wilson.

"Focus groups events held in Montrose, Forfar and Brechin have shown a strongly positive response to proposals for the new service and have been very helpful in identifying further details that need to be worked into the service.

"This new service will be a welcome addition to the range of out-of-hours services already provided in Angus and we hope to have it up and running later this year."

The new service has been welcomed by Angus patient representative Colin Stewart who has a long-term condition.

"When you phoned NHS 24 you could be waiting hours or asked to make your own way to a minor injuries unit.

"This service will be delivered to your door by a paramedic and a highly qualified nurse practitioner," he said.

"If you need a doctor or have to go to hospital, they will have the facility to ensure that happens there and then."

Angus health service campaigner Mrs. Margaret Smith said she welcomed anything that saved unnecessary journeys to hospital.

"But it is yet another reaction to the GP contracts that were awarded three years ago which absolved them from all responsibility for their patients overnight," said Mrs. Smith.

"I am very angry with what the GPs have done— it appalls me."