



38 Degrees Blackpool Fylde and Wyre NHS Support Group

QUESTIONS FOR THE HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 25/09/14

The Fylde Coast 38 Degrees NHS Supporters' Group has more than 700 members in the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre area. It is linked to the national 38 Degrees online campaign group, and aims to safeguard the health service in this area. At a recent meeting, members brought up three issues they thought should be raised with the Scrutiny Committee.

Firstly, they felt the creation of the Better Care Fund would have profound effects on services for the area's most vulnerable adults – particularly older people. Potentially, there could be major benefits. However, there were also substantial risks, because funding streams would have to be transferred from both Adult Services and the CCG, which would have to reduce the Trust's allocation by several million pounds as a result. A final draft local plan was submitted to Government earlier this year, and your June meeting heard that guidance on implementation was still being awaited, although local planning was continuing. In view of the importance of this rapidly-evolving project, does the Committee feel it would be helpful to seek a full update for the current meeting? Would it not also be useful to place the Fund's progress on all its future agendas as a standing item? In addition, could the committee perhaps seek clarification on when, where and in what form the Final Plan will be made available to the public?

Secondly, prevention is always better than cure. The NHS's immunisation programme has played a crucial role in protecting against, and even eliminating, diseases that were once common. However, immunisation is not compulsory, and if there is a fall in uptake below a certain level, disease rates begin to rise again. This has been highlighted by the increase in TB in the inner cities, and by increased levels of measles following the MMR debacle. 38 Degrees asks if the Scrutiny Committee would consider seeking information about local take-up levels for the whole spectrum of infant immunisation. Members feel the committee might also wish to find out whether particular approaches could increase immunisation rates among specific hard-to-reach groups.

Thirdly, a recent meeting received a report on alcohol problems in the resort. In view of the evidence provided by health professionals on the levels of alcohol misuse and alcoholism in the resort, what tactics can the committee propose to combat this problem?

We know that Victoria hospital is inundated with admissions to A&E, and struggling to cope with the horrendous levels of liver cirrhosis, as well as other issues linked to uncontrolled drinking, such as self-harm, alcohol poisoning and the physical and emotional impact of violence-related incidents.

With the demise of the Emro, clearly backed by the emergency services, a defined policy needs to be introduced. Do the committee have recommendations for the council, aimed at curbing heavy drinking, reducing the impact on the emergency services and educating people about the perils of drinking alcohol to excess? Blackpool does not need to be the worst town in Britain for alcohol related health problems!

Some suggestions put forward by our members include:

- Fining irresponsible landlords who continue to sell alcohol to people under the influence.
- Placing a charge on landlords who continue to open their clubs and drinking houses after 3pm.
- Mounting a poster campaign highlighting the effects of binge drinking on the liver and other aspects of personal health, as well as on behaviour and its impact on others.
- Researching what has worked well in other areas, and in other parts of the world.