

ITEM: 10/008
DOC: 04

MEETING: Trust Board
20th January 2010

TITLE: Stroke Decommissioning

Executive Summary:

This paper provides the Board with an update on progress with the development of the Healthcare for London stroke care model. It outlines the plans for decommissioning the Whittington's stroke unit by 1 April 2010 and provides a high level financial analysis of the £538k cost pressure associated with the decommissioning.

ACTION: To note and discuss

REPORT FROM: Fiona Smith, Director of Planning & Performance

SPONSORED BY: Rob Larkman, Chief Executive

Financial Validation

Lead: Director of Finance

Tim Jaggard
Deputy Director of Finance



1. Healthcare for London Stroke review

Following the Healthcare for London (HfL) review of stroke services in 2009 and subsequent formal consultation, the Whittington was given notice of the decommissioning of its stroke service from April 2010. Work has been underway to determine the implications of this and these are outlined below.

2. HfL Stroke model

HfL's model for stroke care is based on a network arrangement. The London Ambulance Service (LAS) will transfer acute stroke patients directly to Hyper Acute Stroke Units (HASUs). Patients who have a stroke in hospital will be transferred to HASUs. HASUs are complemented by Stroke Units (SU) that repatriate patients from the HASUs when stable for inpatient rehabilitation. UCLH has been designated as the HASU and the Royal Free Hospital as the SU in the south of the North Central London sector.

The development (including risk assessment) of the HASU and SU is managed through a sector stroke working group and there is performance management of the implementation to ensure units meet the HfL timescales and develop capacity and clinical expertise in the way that they described in their initial bids.

3. Decommissioning the Whittington's stroke service

The Whittington currently has a 10 bedded stroke unit that cares for approximately 340 suffer a stroke patients per year admitted from the emergency department and from elsewhere in the hospital should they stroke whilst an in-patient. Patients in the stroke unit are looked after by medical, nursing and allied health practitioners who have special training in stroke care.

From 1 April 2010 LAS will no longer bring stroke patients to the Whittington and in fact these numbers are already declining. Patients who have a stroke in hospital will be transferred to UCLH HASU under protocol and will step down to the Royal Free. The Whittington will continue to admit patients who have had a stroke in the past but who require treatment for a secondary condition. Whittington clinicians continue to be members of the sector stroke network and have been involved in developing transfer protocols.

UCLH is currently working to expand its existing stroke unit and will open 21 HASU beds from 1 April. The Royal Free is also increasing its bed capacity for step down stroke patients that are residents of the south of the sector.

Whittington staff who care for stroke patients have been involved in the work to decommission the service. Each member of staff affected by the change in service has been advised of the opportunity for them to TUPE to either the HSAU or to the SU. The majority of staff have decided to remain at the Whittington and their responsibilities will change over the coming months. Staff costs equivalent to those associated with the delivery of stroke care will be reduced through the removal of vacant posts that are currently filled with temporary staff. The Whittington will reduce its bed base by 10 beds on a permanent basis and this forms part of the cost improvement work underway.

4. Financial analysis

In-patient and out patient income associated with acute stroke care at the Whittington is £1,059m per annum. Analysis of the total potential savings identified as a result of decommissioning the stroke service at the Whittington is £521k. Decommissioning the stroke unit therefore results in a cost pressure of £538k. This cost pressure is accommodated within the cost improvement target for 2010/11.