

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Health Overview And Scrutiny Committee

Date of Committee 22nd March 2006

Report Title Review of the Impact of the New Out of Hours Arrangements on South Warwickshire General Hospitals NHS Trust A&E Admission Figures

Summary A report last year highlighted increasing pressures experienced by South Warwickshire PCT caused by higher than expected increase in emergency admissions to South Warwickshire General Hospitals Trust. It was suggested that the new arrangements for GP Out of Hours Service may be contributing to some of the increase in accident and emergency (A&E) admissions. This is a summary of the investigation into this matter.

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) Not Applicable
- Other Elected Members Cllr Roodhouse.....
- Cabinet Member
- Chief Executive David Carter
- Legal Victoria Gould
- Finance

- Other Chief Officers Graeme Betts
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Agenda No

Health Overview And Scrutiny Committee - 22nd March 2006.

Review of the Impact of the New Out of Hours Arrangements on South Warwickshire General Hospitals NHS Trust A&E Admission Figures

Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development.

Recommendation

That the committee considers this report.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 9th November 2005 this committee received a report that outlined the discussions that had taken place with various health bodies in response to proposals from South Warwickshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) to change admission procedures to South Warwickshire General Hospitals Trust.
- 1.2 The report highlighted the increasing pressures experienced by South Warwickshire PCT caused by higher than expected increase in admissions to South Warwickshire General Hospitals Trust. This problem was caused by increases in both emergency admissions and planned referrals by GPs.
- 1.3 It was suggested by a representative of the PPI Forum of South Warwickshire General Hospitals that the new arrangements for GP Out of Hours Service may be contributing to some of the increase in accident and emergency (A&E) admissions. These new arrangements were introduced in May 2004 for South Warwickshire.
- 1.4 This committee resolved:

"That a review take place to look at the GP Out of Hours Service to see whether it had increased hospital emergency admissions."

This paper summarises the results of this review.

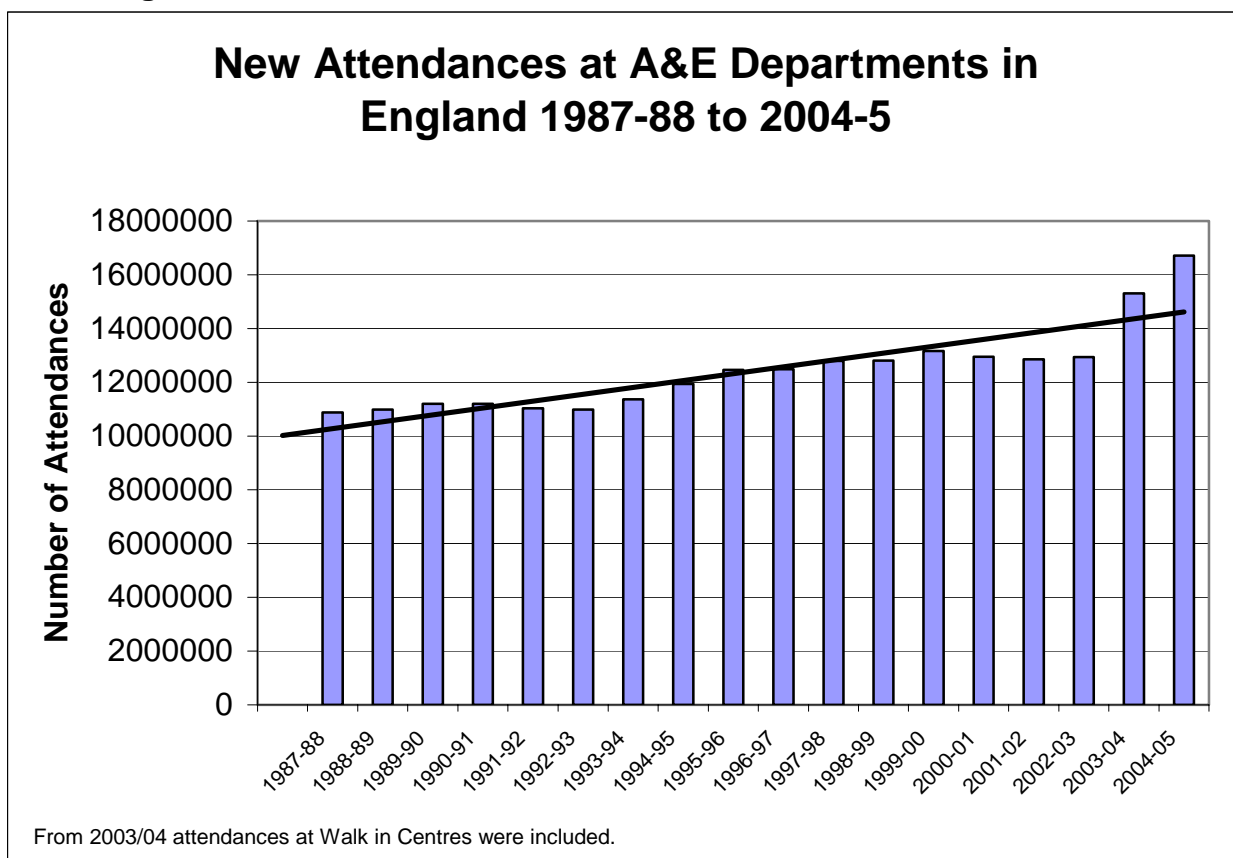
2. Methodology

- 2.1 The A&E figures in South and North Warwickshire was analysed to discover if there had been an unusual increase in A&E figures since the introduction of new arrangements for GP out of Hour Services in 2004. Similar analysis was carried out for national figures.
- 2.2 South Warwickshire PCT, the South Warwickshire General Hospitals Trust, George Eliot Hospital, South Warwickshire PCT PPI Forum, North Warwickshire PPI Forum and South Warwickshire Generals Hospitals Trust PPI Forum were asked whether there was any evidence to suggest that the new GP Out of Hour Services had increased A&E admission figures.
- 2.3 Research was carried out through the Internet to ascertain whether other areas were experiencing increasing in emergency admissions to hospital and whether there was any link to changes in GP Out of Hour Services.

3. Findings

- 3.1 Figure 1 below shows the numbers of new attendances to A&E departments in England from 1987 to 2005, the graph excludes follow up appointments.

1. Figure 1



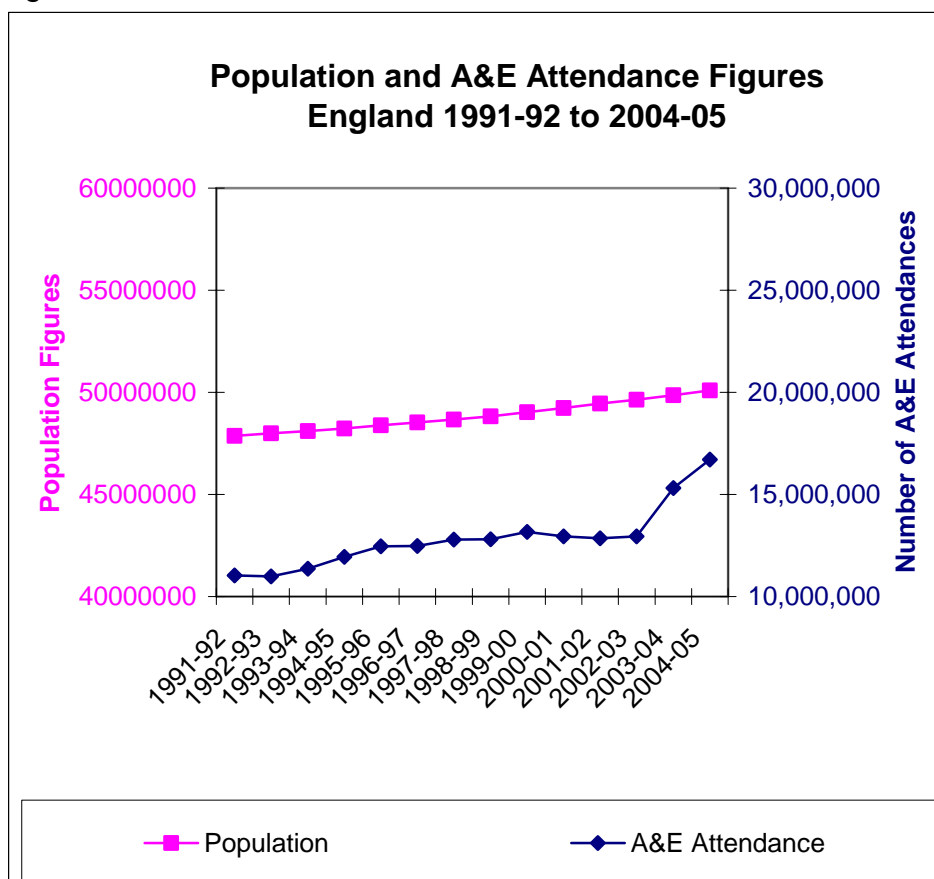
Source: Department of Health – Hospital activity statistics.

It can be seen from the trend line on this graph that the numbers of new A&E attendances in England has had a gentle increase over the years until 2003-

04 and 2004-05 where the increase turns up above the trend. (Note that the numbers for 2000 to 2003 may be suppressed because walk-in centres were introduced in this time period but not included in the numbers until 2003-04).

3.2 An upward trend is not surprising since the population in England has increased over this time period. Figure 2 below plots the increase in population (scale on the left of the graph) and increase in new A&E attendances (scale on the right of the graph):

Figure 2



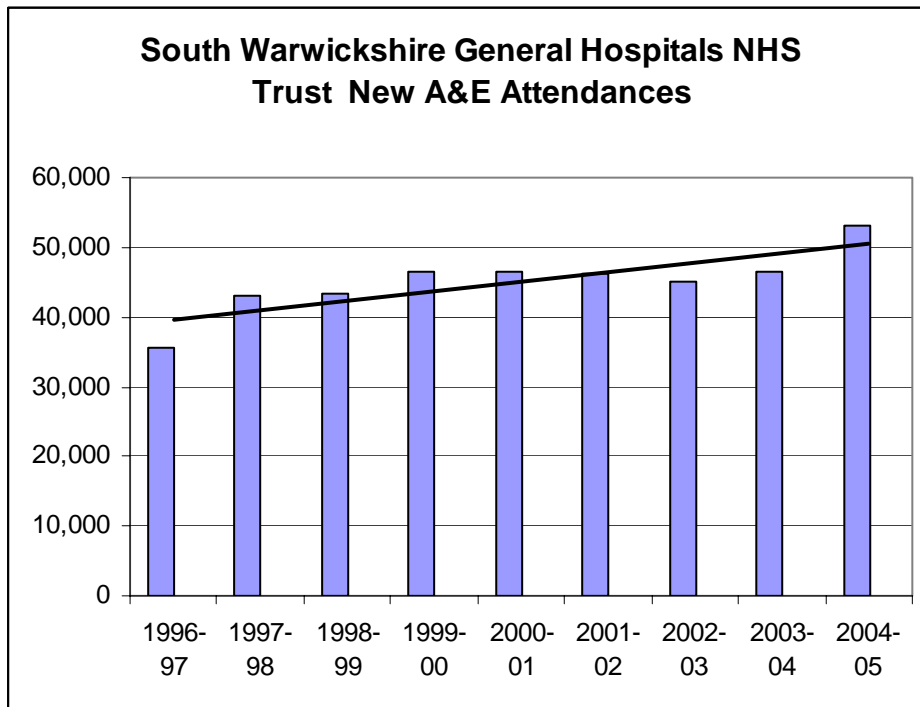
3.3 The figure shows that up to 2003-04 new A&E attendances have more or less mirrored the increase in population. However from April 2003 they have had an unusual rise not explained by a similar population increase.

3.4 There does not appear to be a simple reason for this increase some internet sources have stated the following possible reasons (unaccompanied by research):

- The tendency of GP's to refer more patients to A&E rather than deal with them themselves.
- Reductions in out of hours services in some areas
- Improved waiting times in A&E
- NHS Direct (some research indicates that it increases demand on A&E)
- Increases in binge drinking (one site quoted that on average one out of every three A&E visits are alcohol related)

- 3.5 The same analysis was carried out for South and North Warwickshire. Figure 3 shows the numbers of new (rather than follow up) attendances in A&E for South Warwickshire General Hospital Trust:

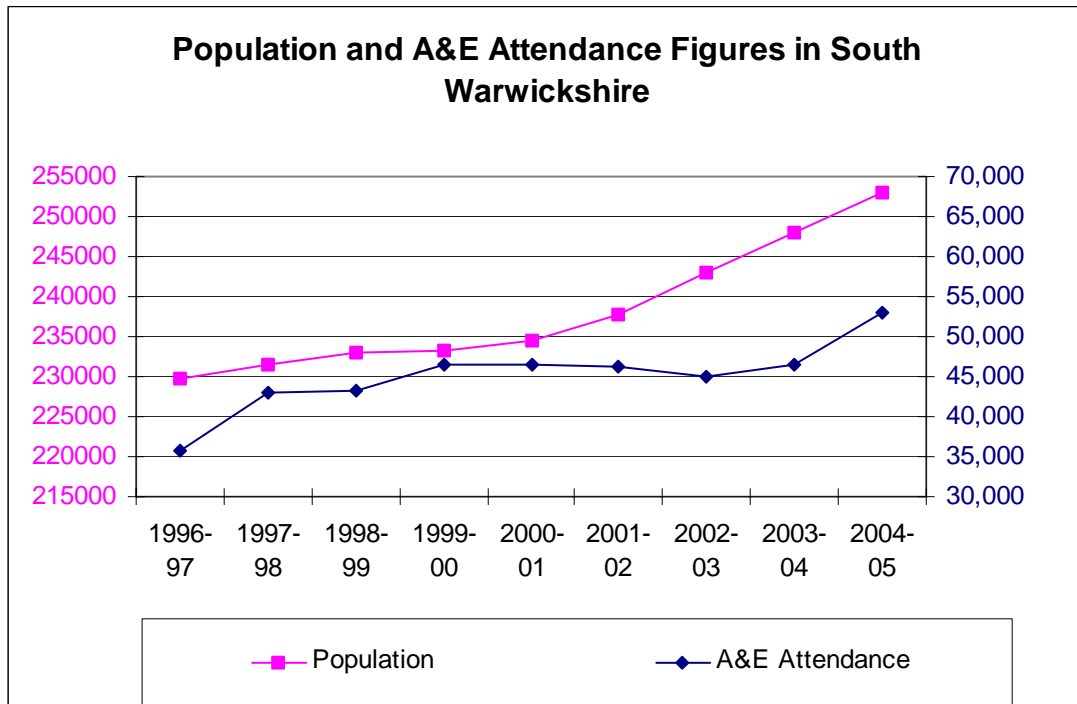
Figure 3



There is an upward trend and 2004-05 does appear slightly above this trend although not unusually so looking at 1997-98 and 1999-00.

- 3.6 Figure 4 below plots the increase in population (scale on the left of the graph) and increase in new A&E attendances (scale on the right of the graph) in South Warwickshire:

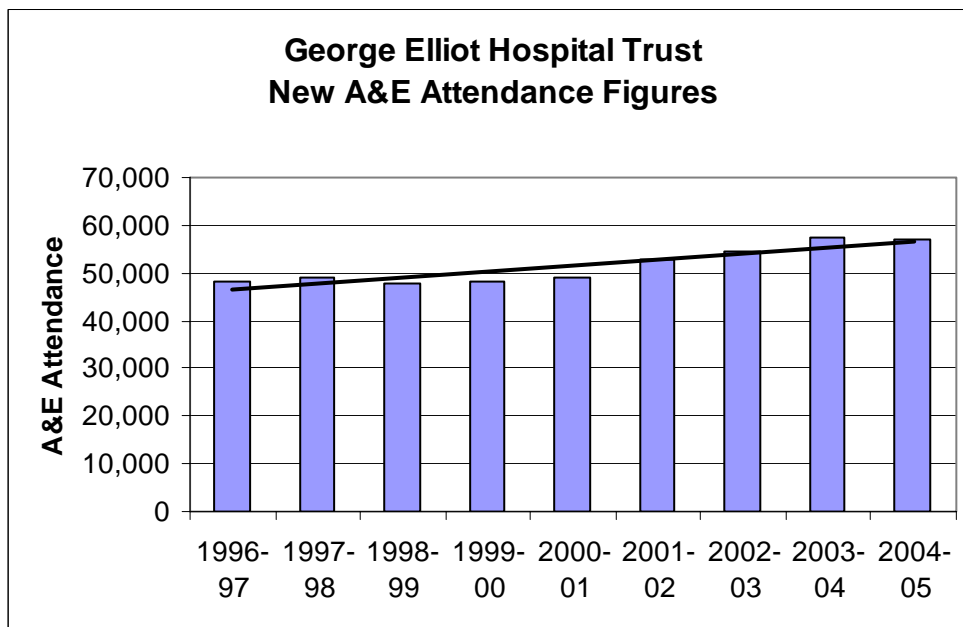
Figure 4



The graph shows that the population has been rising more steeply than A&E attendance between 1999-00 and 2003-4, after this A&E attendance appear to increase at the same rate as the population.

3.7 Figure 5 shows the increase in new A&E attendances for North Warwickshire:

Figure 5



This shows almost a predictable rise in new A&E attendances year on year since 1996-97.

3.8 None of the consultees (see 2.2 above) stated that they reason to believe the recently introduced GP Out of Hours Services within the County had caused an increase in emergency admissions to hospital.

4. Conclusion

4.1 In England, before 2003, A&E figures have risen steadily at the same rate as the population. Since April 2003 there has been a sharp increase in new A&E admissions. The cause of this rise is not known.

4.2 However since 1999/00 South Warwickshire has experienced a sharp growth in population that has not been reflected by a similar growth in A&E admission figures until 2004/05. The increase in A&E admissions in 2004/05 can be explained by increases in the population of South Warwickshire and if the population continues to grow at the same rate then the PCT should expect similar increases in A&E admissions and plan accordingly.

DAVID CARTER
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Performance and
Development.

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23 February 2006