

Nottinghamshire County **LINK**

Shortage of Health Visitors in Bassetlaw

March 2010



Contents

Origination of Issue	Page 3
Participation including Partnership Working	Page 3
Research and Collating Information	Page 4
Results	Page 5
Recommendations	Page 7
Future/Subsequent Issues for Investigation	Page 7
Monitoring of Recommendation Uptakes	Page 7
Appendices	Page 8

Issue Origination

The Nottinghamshire County LINK were made aware of an apparent shortage of Health Visitors for children under five whilst attending support groups in Bassetlaw for parents of young children. From discussing the issues with parents in the area it appeared there was a perceived lack of Health Visitors and that parents in the area were not aware of the location and times of clinics held by Health Visitors in the locality.

All issues raised to the Nottinghamshire County LINK are analysed by the Issues Panel (a panel of LINK participants) using a set of questions which help to score or prioritise the issues. The same questions are used for every issue, as approved by the Nottinghamshire County LINK Executive Board in April 2009.

The group chose to focus the investigation to look at the number of Health Visitors in the area, establish the patterns of clinics held by Health Visitors and also any future improvements that the Bassetlaw PCT were to make to the service in the near future.

Participants and Partners involved in the group:

Below are the members of the Task and Finish Group:

Name	Organisation (if applicable)
Barbara Venes	Nottinghamshire County LINK (Executive Board Lead)
Christopher Fordom	LINK Member
Inderpal Dhillon	LINK Support Team

Research and collation of information

Letters to Statutory bodies

Following the decision to investigate the issue further, the group sent a Statutory 20 Day letter under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 asking for further information about Health Visitors in Bassetlaw.

A letter was sent to the Chief Executive of Bassetlaw Primary Care Trust (PCT) (See Appendix 1) on the 27th May 2009 asking for the following information:

- The number of Health Visitors employed in the Bassetlaw area
- The location of clinics held by Health Visitors or clinics that they regularly visit
- Is the PCT undertaking any work to examine the situation in relation to Health Visitors and patient requirements
- Are the PCT currently advertising for additional Health Visitors and if so, how many new members of staff would need to be recruited to be at full capacity

Internet based research

The group also collected information relating to Health Visitors from statistics made public on the Internet. The LINK were able to find statistics provided by the NHS hospital and community health services (See Appendix 3) who had compiled data on the number of Health Visitors per 10,000 children in England by Strategic Health Authority area and by Organisation. This data was published on the 30th September 2008.

The statistics are for full-time equivalent posts rounded to the nearest whole number.

Meetings with commissioners

During the course of the investigation, members of the Task and Finish group also took the opportunity to meet with members of staff at Bassetlaw PCT and discuss the situation in regards to Health visitors further and research further how the PCT intend to increase the number of staff.

Results

Requests for information

Following the letter sent out on the 27th May 2009 to the Bassetlaw PCT, the following information was received on the 15th June 2009 (See Appendix 2):

- There are 17 Health Visitors, 6 Community Nurses and 5 Community Nursery Nurses.
- There are clinics held in eight locations in the district on a regular basis and as well as offering the clinics, the Health Visitors attend Bumps and Babes sessions at local children's centres in the district.
- The clinics identified are to be reviewed in the near future to offer services in other localities in the district to ensure accessibility of Health Visiting Services.
- The service is in line with Department of Health and Department for Children Schools and Families Guidance and is also in line with locally produced guidance.
- The PCT had experienced staff shortages over a period of six to eight months which has led to service provision being prioritised to ensure continuation.
- The PCT had advertised on three occasions for vacant posts with only one post being filled.
- In light of a shortage of Health Visitors nationally and in line government guidance, Community Nurses were recruited to fill vacant posts and receiving training/mentorship.
- Two additional posts had been created to offer existing staff the opportunity for promotion and to attract external candidates.
- As part of the annual satisfaction survey, the Health Visiting service was being reviewed with the possibility of offering extended services.

Internet based research

The data available on the internet showed that per 10,000 children, Bassetlaw appeared to have slightly lower than average number of Health Visitors compared with other Strategic Health Authorities in England. The data shows that under the Bassetlaw PCT, there are 22 Health Visitors (equivalent full-time posts) with the average for England as a whole being 25.

The data also shows that when compared with the other areas of Nottinghamshire (Under the Nottinghamshire Primary Care Trust), Bassetlaw actually has more Health Visitors in post per 10,000 children

than the rest of the County however, the figures quoted state that the numbers are for Health Visitors providing services for under 5s and does not take into account the 0-19 age range that the Health visitors service provides.

This suggests that the problem is not be with the number of Health Visitors in Bassetlaw, but with the availability of Health Visitors and knowledge of available clinics.

Meetings with commissioners

Following the initial information provided, the Nottinghamshire County LINK felt a meeting to discuss the situation directly with the commissioners of the service, Bassetlaw PCT, would be beneficial to the research.

The meeting was able to address the majority of concerns that the public had raised and provided the LINK with information about the PCT's planning of future services.

In regards to staff, the LINK now understand that there has been a high turnover of staff primarily because the Health Visitors have an extensive skill set and are able to earn higher salaries outside of the NHS with the skills and training they have acquired. The PCT has also not received enough suitable candidates for available Health Visitor positions.

The PCT had decided that to remove this problem, a larger mix of skills should be incorporated into the roles and responsibilities redistributed throughout the teams so that Health Visitors are not responsible for administrative work. A bid had been submitted by the PCT to recruit two Paediatric Support Service Assistants to assist with the administrative functions of the team.

Bassetlaw PCT have put an emphasis on being able to have a named Health Visitor for all Children's Services and also have a named GP service for all Children's Services.

A proposal had also been submitted for an Intense Health Visiting Division who would focus on delivering a service to teenage parents and positive feedback had been received around this.

Whilst the number of Health Visitors had been reduced on a temporary basis in Bassetlaw, it has not impacted on the service delivered and the availability of Health Visitors in the area.

This suggests that more information needs to be provided to parents about the location and timing of clinics and also opportunities to have a named Health Visitor.

Recommendations

The Nottinghamshire County LINK have found that there are enough Health Visitors in the Bassetlaw area to provide an acceptable service. It has also found that Bassetlaw PCT have made sufficient efforts to improve their services over the last 12 months with a reduced number of staff and have identified the areas that they need to extend their services, with bids for funding already in place. However within the present economic climate and contracting budgets from central government, it is yet to be established what services can be effectively rolled out.

The LINK recommends that clinics and day services should be extended to meet the needs of parents in the district and that the availability of clinics be more widely publicised.

Future/subsequent issues

None

Monitoring

The Nottinghamshire County LINK can monitor this by contacting the Bassetlaw PCT in six months and re-establishing the number of staff and the clinics being held. It can also monitor the progress of planned services that have had bids for funding submitted.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Letter to Chief Executive of Bassetlaw PCT

Appendix 2 – Letter received from Child Health Manager at Bassetlaw PCT

Appendix 3 – Statistics from NHS Hospital and Community Health Services

Appendix 1 – Letter to Chief Executive of Bassetlaw PCT

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 Cowliar's
 Nottingham
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www.strongerlocalvoice.com
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Ref: 20 day Statutory Letter
 Date: 27th May 2009

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Dear Ms Newcombe
Nottinghamshire County LINK

I am writing on behalf of the Nottinghamshire County LINK, an organisation of volunteers set up by the Government to promote their Duty To Involve agenda. It is the responsibility of the LINK and its participants to look at community issues in relation to health and social care, and to investigate and offer suggestions to service providers if the LINK is able to suggest any improvements.

A large number of LINK participants have raised the same issue recently – namely, the fact that there is a shortage of Health Visitors for people with young children. We would like to look into this shortage further and see if there are any solutions we can suggest to improve the current system.

Before we can begin any work, we have a number of questions that need to be answered and issues covered:

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- Please could you tell us how many Health Visitors there are in the Bassetlaw area.
- We would also like to know where the Health Visitors hold clinics or regularly visit.
- Are you currently undertaking any work to examine the situation in relation to health visitors and patient requirements?
- Are you currently advertising for additional health visitors and how many staff do you think you need to recruit before you have a full complement?

We have several LINK participants and a number of local organisations interested in partnership working to look at this issue. If you are currently undertaking a review of this position, please let us know if there is anything we can do to assist you. We are hoping that we can use the powers given to us by government legislation (Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) in order to assist our local community and yourselves to make sure that a very difficult situation can be dealt with as advantageously as possible.

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We look forward to hearing from you in relation to this matter and, if possible, working alongside you in relation to this issue.

Yours sincerely

pp **Shirley Inskip**
Chair
On behalf of the Nottinghamshire County LINK

Appendix 2 – Letter received from Child Health Manager at Bassetlaw PCT

Bassetlaw 
Primary Care Trust


Retford Hospital
North Road
Retford
Notts
DN22 7XF

Tel: (01777) 274400
Fax: (01777) 710535

VW/SS

9 June 2009

Shirley Inskip
Nottinghamshire County LINK
Unit E2, Southglade Business Park
Cowlairs
Nottingham NG5 9RA

Code #	
Date Received	15 JUN 2009
Signature	
Print Name	M. Ansell

Dear Shirley

Thank you for your letter dated 27 May 2009.

We currently have in post 17 Health Visitors, 6 Community Nurses and 5 Community Nursery Nurses. The Health Visiting service offer services to anybody living in the Bassetlaw Locality and will home visit where required. They also offer clinics across the locality, (please see below venues and times of these clinics which are also available on the PCT internet site under the heading of 'Your Local NHS Services then Community Services Provided') and contribute to the bumps and babes sessions in the local children's centres

Langold and Carlton

Tuesday 10am – 12noon - Gateway Centre, Carlton-in-Lindrick
Thursday 1– 3pm - Langold SureStart Centre

Larwood

Monday 1.30 – 2.30pm pm - Larwood Surgery
Friday 10.30am – 12noon - Larwood Surgery

Tuxford

Wednesday 9.30 – 11.30am - Tuxford Clinic (alternate weeks)

Leverton

Thursday 2 – 4pm alternate weeks - Leverton Children's Centre

Manton

Monday 2 – 3.30pm - Newgate Street Surgery
Wednesday 2 – 3.30pm - Newgate Street Surgery
Friday 10am – 12noon - Newgate Street Surgery

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Chairman: Mr. Dean Fathers Chief Executive: Mrs. Louise Newcombe

Appendix 2 – Letter received from Child Health Manager at Bassetlaw PCT

Retford

2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month 2 – 4pm - Crownhouse Surgery

Tuesday 10 – 12noon - Riverside Surgery

1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month 10am – 12noon - Tall Trees Surgery

Thursday 1.30 – 3.30pm - Retford Primary Care Centre

Harworth

Wednesday 1.30 – 3pm - Harworth Medical Centre, Harworth Primary Care Centre

Misterton/West Stockwith

1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month 11am -12.30pm - Misterton Methodist Church

The above clinics however are being reviewed in light of the need to offer services within other localities, namely children's centres to ensure choice of access to the health visiting service.

We are working in line with Department of Health and Department for Children Schools and Families guidance, most recently 'Healthy Lives, brighter futures: The strategy for children and young peoples health' to ensure that we have a service in line with these recommendations as well as one that is locally led.

As a service we have over the last 6-8 months experienced staff shortages which has meant that we have had to prioritise the service provision offered to ensure that we are offering a safe service. We have advertised on 3 occasions for the vacant posts with only 1 suitable candidate who was subsequently offered a post. This shortage is also a national issue and despite the vacancies the caseload numbers for Health Visitors in Bassetlaw is still lower than the national average. Consequently we made a decision in line with the government guidance to recruit additional community nurses to fill the vacancies, all of whom are now in post and receiving a period of induction/mentorship. We have also created 2 additional posts that will offer a promotion opportunity to existing staff and also hopefully attract external candidates. We are due to interview for these posts in the next month. Once these 2 posts are recruited to we will have no further vacancies.

The Health Visiting service undertakes an annual satisfaction survey and acts upon the findings ensuring that our service is delivered in line with local need, for example offering the service beyond the existing hours of Monday – Friday 9-5pm, something of which we are currently reviewing. We also intend over the next year to build on our existing user involvement better ensuring that the public have a say in the services delivered.

I hope this has answered the questions you asked. Should you require any further information then please feel free to contact me on the above number.

Yours sincerely



Vicky Waring
Child Health Manager
Bassetlaw Primary Care Trust

Appendix 3 – Statistics from NHS hospital and Community health services

NHS hospital and community health services: Health visitors per 10,000 children⁽¹⁾ in England by strategic health authority area and by organisation as at 30 September 2008

		Number
England average		25
<i>North East Strategic Health Authority area</i>		33
County Durham Primary Care Trust (PCT)	5ND	3
Darlington PCT	5J9	191
Gateshead PCT	5KF	30
Hartlepool PCT	5D9	18
Newcastle PCT	5D7	37
North Tees PCT	5E1	25
North Tyneside PCT	5D8	35
Northumberland Care Trust	TAC	20
Redcar and Cleveland PCT	5QR	50
South Tyneside PCT	5KG	43
Sunderland Teaching PCT	5KL	32
<i>North West Strategic Health Authority area</i>		31
Ashton, Leigh and Wigan PCT	5HG	40
Blackburn with Darwen PCT	5CC	37
Blackpool PCT	5HP	58
Bolton PCT	5HQ	31
Bury PCT	5JX	33
Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT	5NP	23
Central Lancashire PCT	5NG	27
Cumbria PCT	5NE	30
East Lancashire PCT	5NH	29
Halton and St. Helens PCT	5NM	27
Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale PCT	5NQ	39
Knowsley PCT	5J4	42
Liverpool PCT	5NL	31
Manchester PCT	5NT	28
North Lancashire PCT	5NF	40
Oldham PCT	5J5	22
Salford PCT	5F5	21
Sefton PCT	5NJ	28
Stockport PCT	5F7	29
Tameside and Glossop PCT	5LH	30
Trafford PCT	5NR	25
Warrington PCT	5J2	28
West Cheshire PCT	5NN	34
Wirral PCT	5NK	31
<i>Yorkshire and the Humber Strategic Health Authority area</i>		28
Barnsley PCT	5JE	32
Bradford and Airedale Teaching PCT	5NY	26
Calderdale PCT	5J6	33
Doncaster PCT	5N5	37
East Riding of Yorkshire PCT	5NW	27
Hull Teaching PCT	5NX	34
Kirklees PCT	5N2	21
Leeds PCT	5N1	26
North East Lincolnshire Care trust	TAN	32

North Lincolnshire PCT	5EF	28
North Yorkshire and York PCT	5NV	22
Rotherham PCT	5H8	29
Sheffield PCT	5N4	26
Wakefield District PCT	5N3	34
<i>East Midlands Strategic Health Authority area</i>		24
Bassetlaw PCT	5ET	22
Derby City PCT	5N7	27
Derbyshire County PCT	5N6	30
Leicester City Teaching PCT	5PC	22
Leicestershire County and Rutland PCT	5PA	17
Lincolnshire Teaching PCT	5N9	27
Northamptonshire Teaching P CT	5PD	19
Nottingham City PCT	5EM	35
Nottinghamshire County Teaching PCT	5N8	20
<i>West Midlands Strategic Health Authority area</i>		25
Birmingham East and North PCT	5PG	19
Coventry Teaching PCT	5MD	15
Dudley PCT	5PE	28
Heart of Birmingham Teaching PCT	5MX	23
Herefordshire PCT	5CN	19
North Staffordshire PCT	5PH	30
Sandwell PCT	5PF	27
Shropshire County PCT	5M2	25
Solihull Care Trust	TAM	33
South Birmingham PCT	5M1	24
South Staffordshire PCT	5PK	27
Stoke on Trent Teaching PCT	5PJ	37
Telford and Wrekin PCT	5MK	28
Walsall Teaching PCT	5M3	24
Warwickshire PCT	5PM	22
Wolverhampton City PCT	5MV	27
Worcestershire PCT	5PL	29
<i>East of England Strategic Health Authority area</i>		21
Bedfordshire PCT	5P2	23
Cambridgeshire PCT	5PP	11
East and North Hertfordshire PCT	5P3	21
Great Yarmouth and Waveney Teaching PCT	5PR	27
Luton PCT	5GC	20
Mid Essex PCT	5PX	17
Norfolk PCT	5PQ	24
North East Essex PCT	5PW	19
Peterborough PCT	5PN	26
South East Essex PCT	5P1	25
South West Essex Teaching PCT	5PY	25
Suffolk PCT	5PT	21
West Essex PCT	5PV	20
West Hertfordshire PCT	5P4	20
<i>London Strategic Health Authority area</i>		21
Barking and Dagenham PCT	5C2	12
Barnet PCT	5A9	9
Bexley Care Trust	TAK	27
Brent Teaching PCT	5K5	16
Bromley PCT	5A7	26

Camden PCT	5K7	18
City and Hackney PCT	5C3	21
Croydon PCT	5K9	20
Ealing PCT	5HX	22
Enfield PCT	5C1	16
Greenwich Teaching PCT	5A8	22
Hammersmith and Fulham PCT	5H1	44
Haringey Teaching PCT	5C9	2
Harrow PCT	5K6	18
Havering PCT	5A4	20
Hillingdon PCT	5AT	20
Hounslow PCT	5HY	16
Islington PCT	5K8	21
Kensington and Chelsea PCT	5LA	23
Kingston PCT	5A5	17
Lambeth PCT	5LD	17
Lewisham PCT	5LF	31
Newham PCT	5C5	12
Redbridge PCT	5NA	17
Richmond and Twickenham	5M6	20
Southwark PCT	5LE	39
Sutton and Merton PCT	5M7	25
Tower Hamlets PCT	5C4	23
Waltham Forest PCT	5NC	20
Wandsworth PCT	5LG	22
Westminster PCT	5LC	34
<i>South East Coast Strategic Health Authority area</i>		21
East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT	5P7	25
Eastern and Coastal Kent Teaching PCT	5QA	24
Hastings and Rother PCT	5P8	31
Medway PCT	5L3	25
Surrey PCT	5P5	15
West Kent PCT	5P9	15
West Sussex Teaching PCT	5P6	17
<i>South Central Strategic Health Authority area</i>		20
Berkshire East Teaching PCT	5QG	18
Berkshire West PCT	5QF	20
Buckinghamshire PCT	5QD	22
Hampshire PCT	5QC	15
Isle of Wight Healthcare PCT	5QT	21
Milton Keynes PCT	5CQ	26
Oxfordshire PCT	5QE	25
Portsmouth City Teaching PCT	5FE	24
Southampton City PCT	5L1	17
<i>South West Strategic Health Authority area</i>		26
Bath and North East Somerset PCT	5FL	29
Bournemouth and Poole PCT	5QN	31
Bristol Teaching PCT	5QJ	32
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly PCT	5QP	29
Devon PCT	5QQ	21
Dorset PCT	5QM	28
Gloucestershire PCT	5QH	27
North Somerset PCT	5M8	23
Plymouth Teaching PCT	5F1	28

Somerset PCT	5QL	23
South Gloucestershire PCT	5A3	22
Swindon PCT	5K3	19
Torbay Care Trust	TAL	27
Wiltshire PCT	5QK	21

⁽¹⁾ Children are defined as those aged 0-5 years.

Notes:

1. Full-time equivalent figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.
2. Strategic health authority area totals include a small number of staff employed by NHS trusts including, for example, health visitors employed by Great Ormond Street and working in Haringey.
3. The low figure for County Durham and extremely high figure for Darlington are an anomaly caused by the fact that County Durham commissions services for both County Durham and Darlington and in the case of community health services, these are provided for both PCTs by Darlington.