



Better Healthcare Closer to Home

News Release

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LOCAL CLINIC SHORTLISTED FOR A NATIONAL AWARD

A local clinic which provides treatment and advice for patients in Sutton with joint and muscle problems has been nominated for a national award for excellence. The Musculoskeletal Centre in Sutton provides healthcare outside the traditional setting of an orthopaedic clinic in a large general hospital, and is one of five finalists in the “Clinical Service Redesign” category of the Health Service Journal (HSJ) Awards 2007.

The award recognises the achievements of cross-organisation working to design healthcare services around the needs of local people. Since September 2006 GP practices in Sutton have sent referrals for patients with joint and muscle problems to the centre. Patients have received treatment and advice at the centre from specialist GPs and other healthcare professionals, including podiatrists and physiotherapists. This has reduced waiting times for hospital appointments, ensuring patients are seen, diagnosed and treated much faster.

The Musculoskeletal Centre was established in 2005 as part of “Better Healthcare Closer to Home”, the long-term local strategy for improving how local healthcare is delivered by providing more care outside hospital, and in health centres and patients’ own homes.

Sheila Cuffley, 82, a patient at the Musculoskeletal Centre commented:

“I’ve been to the Musculoskeletal Centre before for osteoarthritis in my knee and I was very pleased with the treatment they gave me. So when my shoulder became very sore all of a sudden, I went to see my local doctor and they referred me to the Musculoskeletal Centre again straight away. I was able to make an appointment at a time that suited me. The doctor diagnosed my condition and gave me injections to treat the pain. The physiotherapist also showed me some exercises that I could do

at home to manage my pain. I find it much easier to visit the centre than go to one of the bigger hospitals. It's brilliant that I can be seen so quickly by a specialist as well."

The decision to send all appropriate referrals to the Musculoskeletal Centre was made by GPs in Sutton through the Sutton Horizon Consortium, a practice based commissioning group*. Jonathan Bates, Chief Executive of the group, commented:

"It's fantastic news that we have been recognised for the service improvements we have made at the Musculoskeletal Centre. The Centre allows patients with orthopaedic and rheumatology conditions to be seen quickly, often in a few weeks rather than a few months. One of the reasons the scheme has been such a success is that both physiotherapists and GPs with specialist skills have been able to work with hospital specialists under one roof. This means patients see the right clinician for their specific condition in one place, rather than through repeated visits to different locations to access their healthcare."

Dr Heather Lings, a GP at Shotfield Health Centre, Wallington added:

"From the GP perspective, this service simplifies musculoskeletal referrals, as there is a single point of access to healthcare. The time to patient assessment is quicker than previously, as it is to any investigations and management of the condition. The patients also seem to like ringing to book their own appointments, so they can make arrangements that fit around the rest of their lives."

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For further information, please contact the communications team on

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Notes to Editor

* Practiced based commissioning gives more influence and control to GP practices over how money is spent to provide better healthcare to their patients. Sutton Horizon, a Practice Based Commissioning consortium of approximately 95,000 patients (25% of the PCT's total population) in 14 practices, participated in the Musculoskeletal Centre pilot.

More information on Better Healthcare Closer to Home can be found at www.betterhealthcare.org.uk.