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# Final Report on Review of Access to Consultant for Multiple Sclerosis at Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust

Completed October 2010

## THE REFERRAL

An individual who was representing the views of several people with multiple sclerosis contacted the Reading LINK. The referrer expressed concern that the system of accessing a Consultant for Multiple Sclerosis once the initial diagnosis had been made lacked clarity and resulted in some confusion for newly diagnosed patients. The referrer asked the Reading LINK to raise this with the Royal Berkshire Hospital Foundation Trust (RBHFT) and make recommendations on how this may be improved on behalf of the patients she represented.

## THE PROCESS AND RESPONSE

A Task and Finish Group was formed and reviewed the many aspects of this issue raised and decided to write to the Royal Berkshire Hospital for their views on the information received by the LINK. Below is a summary of the questions asked by the LINK and response received (full details are available on request) :

- **Question: Why is there a problem accessing a Consultant Opinion?**  
*Response: The RBH explained that for those already known to the service the key contact is the MS Nurse who has a dedicated phone line. The Nurse and the patient are then able to discuss the most suitable course of action, ensuring that the most appropriate, prompt treatment is accessed*
- **Question: Are patients upon diagnosis made aware of the availability of expertise and opinions from both the Neurology Consultant Team and the Neuro-Rehabilitation Team?**  
*Response: It would be rare for a newly diagnosed patient to require the services of the Neuro-Rehabilitation Team*
- **Question: Why is it not made clear when out patient appointments are received whether the appointment is with the MS Nurse Clinic or MS Consultant led Clinic?**  
*Response: We agree this is unsatisfactory and are reviewing the letters so it is clear who the patient will be seeing*
- **Question: Waiting in outpatients can prove very tiring for those with MS. Can patients be issued with pagers so they may wait somewhere more comfortable until their appointment time?**  
*Response: We agree that offering pagers to patients in the event of clinic over runs is a good idea and we intend to pilot your suggestion*

- **Question: Despite the positive feedback received regarding the service offered by the MS Specialist Nurse, are there any plans to update the literature available to MS Patients?**

*Response: Everybody diagnosed with MS is put in contact with the MS nurse who is well placed to describe the service on offer. The support and advice the Nurse is able to offer ensures that patients are aware of all the services available. The literature provided is currently being audited to ensure it is up to date and relevant. On diagnosis patients are given a direct telephone number to access the MS nurse without any prior appointment.*

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Task and Finish Group considered in detail the response they received from the RBH. They noted the positive actions planned in response to the questions, and the information provided regarding how the Clinics operate. They wish to formally make the following recommendation:

- 1. From the point of referral to the RBHFT and during ongoing care it should be made clear to patients and their carers that the MS nurse will be their main contact in accessing all available services. (The importance of the role of the MS Nurse in enabling patients to access appropriate treatment is the key to good patient experience).**
- 2. Appointment letters sent to patients should clearly state who the appointment will be with.**
- 3. The use of pagers should be trialled to assess if they help to improve the patient experience when attending clinics that maybe delayed or for patients who may find the visit particularly tiring.**

The Task and Finish Group will review all the improvements proposed in the response from the RBH in April 2011, as well as reviewing the printed advice given to newly diagnosed patients to assess compliance and impact on patient care

Prepared by the LINK Board Task and Finish Group  
October 2011

**RESPONSE FROM ROYAL BERKSHIRE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST (RBHT):**

**The RBHT reported that they were satisfied with the report and their response as detailed in the report**