

Item 9a

Asthma UK is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the 5.2 million people in the UK with asthma

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Pat Warner
Scrutiny Officer
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
The Civic Centre
Darwall Street
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08 December 2005

Dear Pat Warner

Birmingham & Black Country Regional Scrutiny Chairs' Forum & Asthma

Thank you for the recent opportunity Asthma UK was given to speak at the Regional Scrutiny Chair's Forum.

Asthma UK is keen to work with local authorities to make the most of any opportunities to prioritise asthma as a topic for scrutiny/review and I now write to follow up on that presentation, to provide you with some additional background material and to answer the questions that arose on the day. I have attached the notes of the presentation for information.

A question arose with regard to the figures representing Asthma at School and I can now clarify that this data is drawn from the Asthma UK - National Asthma Panel¹. The specific figures of 38% school absence and 37% of unnecessarily missed PE come from the 2003 survey. The 2005 survey tells us that 24% of children represented by the survey have missed 6 days or more from school in the previous year.

Another question related to the accessibility of the data given on hospital admission figures by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in the region. I have investigated and can now provide the data in relation to the PCTs in your area.

For **Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council** therefore the information is as follows. For hospital admissions for asthma per 10,000 head of population with a ranking of 1 indicating the most admissions in the UK for the period covered:

PCT	2002/03	Ranking of 302	2003/04	Ranking of 302
Walsall Teaching PCT	14.8	62	15.1	74

¹ The National Asthma Panel is a stratified random sample of up to 1500 people with asthma and parents of children with asthma.





I also attach for your information:

- A copy of the *Manifesto for Physical Activity* launched at the recent Party Political Conferences and produced in partnership with Cancer Research UK and The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and supported by Sport England
- An order form for *Out There and Active* materials to encourage children with asthma into exercise
- An order form for materials specifically designed for early years health care
- The *Asthma at Work Charter* - to which employers are encouraged to sign up

Finally I have included an additional copy of the guide *Asthma & Health Scrutiny* and the sample topic paper on *Asthma Policies in Schools*.

Asthma UK is the charity dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the 5.2 million people in the UK who have asthma. We work with people with asthma, healthcare professionals and researchers to develop and share expertise to help people increase their understanding and reduce the effect of asthma on their lives.

We very much hope that you will feel that asthma is a suitable topic for scrutiny and agree that there are clear benefits to be gained and that there exists the possibility that real improvements in local health care can be achieved.

If you have any questions or there is anything that we are able to do to assist you further in this matter please do not hesitate to contact me on 020 7786 5008 or bhall@asthma.org.uk.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bridged Hall".

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Asthma and health scrutiny

a guide for

Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees

produced by

Asthma UK

Richmond-upon-Thames:

Following an initial approach from Asthma UK, Richmond-upon-Thames council carried out a broad review into childhood asthma.

This led to the council making 24 recommendations to improve the lives of children with asthma, covering topics such as training for schools, the impact of traffic on pollution levels, and providing flu vaccinations.

Why scrutinise asthma?

Facts

- 5.2m people in the UK are currently receiving treatment for asthma
- 1 in 10 children has asthma and a child is admitted to hospital every 18 minutes because of their asthma
- An estimated 75% of admissions for asthma are avoidable and as many as 90% of the deaths from asthma are preventable
- Caring for people who experience an asthma attack costs more than 3.5 times than for those whose asthma is well managed
- Asthma is not just a NHS/primary care issue over 12.7m working days are lost to asthma each year
- Only 24% of people with asthma have a written personal asthma action plans

Asthma UK

Asthma UK is the charity dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the 5.2 million people in the UK whose lives are affected by asthma. We work together with people with asthma, health professionals and researchers to develop and share expertise to help people increase their understanding and reduce the effect of asthma on their lives.

Waltham Forest: *Aware of Asthma UK's successful support of various scrutiny reviews, the London Borough of Waltham Forest approached us to contribute to its proposed Tobacco and Scrutiny Panel to examine the correlation between illness and/or mortality and smoking.*

The panel identified five objectives to focus on: health and education policies on smoking in schools and colleges; strategies to control sales to underage children; reviewing existing regulations and policies regarding smoking in the workplace and in public places; reviewing existing scientific research relating to the correlation between mortality rates and the damage to people's health as a result of smoking; passive smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco; and finally, a review of the Borough's smoking cessation services.



Wakefield carried out an inquiry into the use of school asthma policies, following an approach from Asthma UK. As a result, more than 6,500 children with asthma in Wakefield will now receive the support they need to take a full and active part in school.

How can we support your scrutiny review of asthma?

Asthma UK's Community Development team has an established record in working with health scrutiny. They have:

- information on issues that concern people with asthma that can be considered or reviewed by scrutiny committees
- more detailed specific questions with supporting briefing papers should you want to focus on one particular issue in depth
- a wealth of accessible information for scrutiny officers and committees, including our website www.asthma.org.uk, leaflets, our Asthma UK Adviceline 0845 7 01 02 03 and from specialist staff where appropriate
- knowledge of agencies or people that you may need to support your review/scrutiny work
- an understanding of the scrutiny process from our experience of working with other councils

The London Borough of Newham co-opted a local person with asthma and a local parent of a child with asthma onto their scrutiny committee for their Addressing Asthma in Newham Review. The committee visited a range of sites in Newham and took evidence from a number of expert witnesses covering occupational asthma, public health and pharmacy to see how asthma was currently managed within the borough. The committee's 28 recommendations which will lead to improvements in local asthma care, focused on increasing access to specialist care, improving follow-up after people with asthma attend A&E, enhancing the experience of children with asthma in Newham's schools, and tackling environmental triggers such as air quality and housing.

Topics for scrutiny

Having listened to people with asthma from a range of different backgrounds, we have developed a number of possible scrutiny topics. You may wish to talk to us about the following examples.

Education department:

Have local schools complied with the Secretary of State for Education and Skills notice to all schools in the UK in March 2002 on asthma policies in schools?

Health services:

Within your local Primary Care Trust, are children with asthma treated as individuals, with access to:

- High quality primary care services with appropriately trained staff?
- The most suitable inhaler for their needs and training in how to use it effectively?
- Follow up appointments after attendance at A&E?

Are parents and carers supported by the provision of:

- Smoking cessation clinics, especially for expectant mothers?
- Education and training on allergen avoidance and use of inhalers?

Housing:

Does your housing department aim to reduce indoor allergens for people with asthma?

- Are all new upvc windows fitted with trickle vents?
- Do you tackle and treat causes of damp?

To find out how easy it is to carry out a successful health scrutiny that makes a real difference for people with asthma in your local area, contact us:

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For consideration by the
Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Health

**Has your local education authority
complied with the Secretary of State
for Education and Skills notice to all
schools in the UK in March 2002 on
asthma policies in schools?**

Are schools in your area supporting children with asthma?

School asthma policies are not expensive to implement, and the savings in improvement to the health and education of children with asthma are immense. For these reasons Asthma UK calls for your local council to ensure that every school in your local area is following the government guidance to implement a school asthma policy, thereby ensuring that children with asthma have an increased chance of taking a full and active part in school life.

Asthma UK is especially keen to support parents of children with asthma, who state that they are extremely anxious about their children when they are away from them, especially whilst at school. Therefore we have developed a sample school asthma policy¹, in conjunction with the Department for Education and Skills, local education authorities, school health services, parents, governing bodies and pupils, to aid schools in supporting the three children with asthma in every class. A school asthma policy can be a stand-alone policy or incorporated into part of another school policy, for example the Health and Safety, first aid, general health policy or curriculum.

The benefits to children with asthma have been proven, as this illustration of a primary school's experience of introducing a school asthma policy shows:

Like many schools, Fremington Community Primary School in Devon, had no record of which pupils had asthma and which treatment they responded to. It does now. "I was appalled at what we were doing before," says Jenny Hill, the teacher who now acts as asthma co-ordinator for the school. "Inhalers were kept in the office and children queued up every day to have a puff at 12 o'clock, whether they needed it not. Now they are in baskets in each class, and can be used at any time."

*Since the asthma policy was introduced into the Barnstaple area the number of children admitted to hospital with asthma attacks has dropped from 32 a year to just two. "Parents have more confidence in us now," says Mrs Hill. "If their son or daughter had a bad night they used to keep them off school the next day because they thought the teachers had no idea what to do. Now they send them in. There has been a dramatic reduction in the number of days off, which means individual boys and girls are getting a much better education."*²

In March 2002 the Education and Skills secretary, Rt Hon Estelle Morris MP issued a notice to all schools in the UK telling them that; *"having positive policies on medical conditions, such as asthma, will help protect pupils' health and safety while allowing them to take as full a part as possible in school activities"*.

The minister was responding to calls by Asthma UK and the Independent on Sunday², who as part of their asthma campaign were asking for all schools to implement school asthma policies.

¹ Sample school asthma policy taken from the school pack - www.asthma.org.uk/about/resource07.php

² The Independent on Sunday Asthma campaign - <http://www.independent.co.uk/story.jsp?story=250817> - Also see "Asthma in school: empowering children" Asthma Journal 2000; 5: 32-3

The minister encouraged all local education authorities and schools to adopt the existing good practice guide on Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs³.

Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs³ was published in 1996 by the Department of Education and Employment and includes a basic information section on asthma. The guidance has been written to help schools draw up policies on managing medication in schools, and to put in place effective management systems to support individual pupils with medical needs. A positive response by the school to a pupil's medical needs will not only benefit the pupil directly, but can also positively influence the attitude of the whole class.

The guidance not only covers general points around the storage and dispensing of medicines within school but also offers specific advice around certain conditions including asthma. It clearly states that, "*A few medicines, such as asthma inhalers, must be readily available to pupils and must not be locked away.*" (Our emphasis). However, many schools ignore this guidance and continue to keep vital reliever medication locked away, thereby putting the one in ten children with asthma in the UK⁴ at unnecessary risk.

A clear policy implemented and accepted by staff, parents and pupils provides a sound basis for ensuring that children with asthma receive proper support and attention during exacerbated asthma symptoms at school and enables regular school attendance.

Recent research by Asthma UK on teenagers and asthma stressed the positive influence that teachers, especially PE teachers, have on children with asthma. The research showed that "*health behaviours adopted at this stage of life will affect future, long term health gains and quality of life*", yet teenagers in particular wish to avoid "*at all costs*" being seen as different from their peers and that they "*take risks when exercising so as not to stand out during PE*". PE is the one class where children with asthma should not hide their needs, as many will have to take their reliever inhaler to avoid becoming breathless. Therefore, supporting PE teachers with knowledge and skills to work with children with asthma is particularly essential for maintaining safety and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

³ Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs - A good practice guide - www.dfes.gov.uk/medical

⁴ Health Survey for England 2001. Joint Health Surveys Unit, 2003; The Scottish Health Survey 1998. Joint Health Surveys Unit, 2000; Census 2001 (Office for National Statistics: ONS)



asthma.org.uk



Asthma today

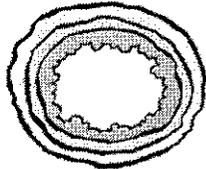
Bridged Canavan

Community Development & Volunteering Officer

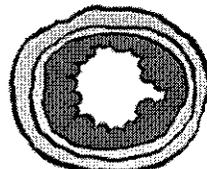
So briefly...



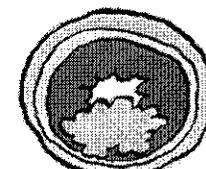
Asthma is a condition of the airways where there is difficulty in breathing due to



inflammation



swelling



excess mucus

or a combination of all three

What is asthma?



- Condition that affects the airways
- People with asthma: airways inflamed
- Airways can react badly when people have a cold or other viral infection, or when they come into contact with an asthma trigger
- Symptoms: coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath or a tight feeling in the chest

Why do people get asthma?



- You are more likely to develop asthma if you have a family history of asthma or allergy
- There are probably other environmental factors that contribute to someone developing asthma
 - Many aspects of modern lifestyle, such as housing and diet might be responsible
 - We know that smoking during pregnancy increases the chance of developing asthma
 - There is some evidence that traffic pollution can also cause asthma

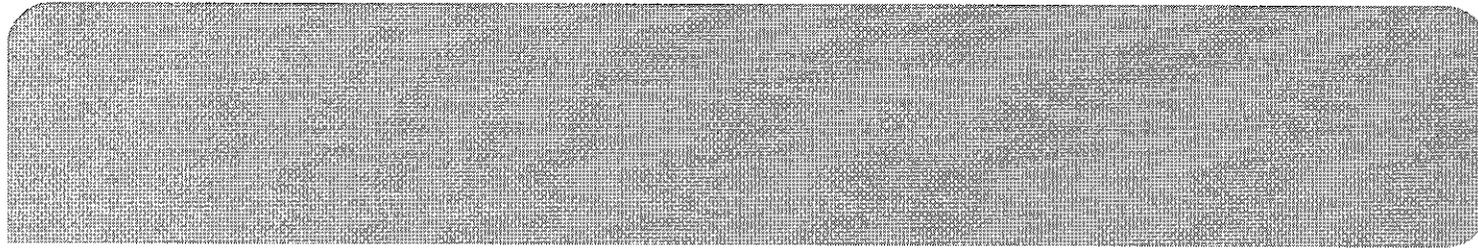
There is no cure for asthma



However there are two main types of treatment for asthma

- Relievers: to open the airways
- Preventers: to suppress inflammation





Asthma can affect anyone,
irrespective of social class, age or
race

The facts - General



- 5.2m people in the UK are currently receiving treatment for asthma (1 in 12 adults, 1 in 10 children)
- 2.6m people with severe asthma symptoms in the UK
- Nearly one-third of all long-term childhood illnesses are due to doctor-diagnosed asthma
- There is a person with asthma in 1 in 5 households in the UK

The facts - HealthCare



- Over 69,000 hospital admissions in 2002 - an estimated 75% of these were avoidable
- Every 18 minutes a child is admitted to hospital in the UK because of their asthma
- On average one person dies every seven hours because of their asthma - as many as 90% of these are preventable

The Costs



- Over 12.7m working days are lost to asthma each year
- Asthma costs the NHS an average of £889m per year
- Caring for people who experience an asthma attack costs 3.5 times more than for those whose asthma is well managed
- The estimated annual cost of treating a child with asthma (£181) is higher than the cost per adult with asthma (£162)

Asthma at school



Asthma is the most common long-term medical condition in children:

- About 3 children in every class have asthma
- 38% of children miss more than one week of school per year because of their asthma
- 37% of children miss PE because of their asthma

What We Know



- South Asian people are 3 times more likely and black people twice as likely to access asthma care via emergency hospital admission than white people
- The West Midlands has some of the largest BME communities in the UK
- PCT's in the region rank 1st, 2nd & 6th of 303 for asthma hospital admissions per 10,000 population in 2002
- Hospital admission for under 14's was almost a 1/3 higher than national average in some areas in the region between 2001 & 2004

What We Don't Know



- Unable to establish clear ethnicity breakdowns for hospital admission in the region
- Currently investigating issues around access to asthma care for South Asians
- What the current financial costs of asthma are in West Midlands

People With Asthma tell us how asthma feels



'being strangled without the hands around your neck'

'it feels like someone has put a ten-ton stack of bricks on your chest'

'you take a huge bucket of air but can only get a spoonful down'

Asthma UK



- Asthma UK provides information and support to people with asthma
- Our research funding continues to support work that will benefit people with asthma
- Anyone can speak to one of our asthma nurses on the Asthma UK Adviceline 08457 01 02 03, open 9am-5pm Monday - Friday (Interpreting Service)
- asthma.org.uk

Supporting Scrutiny



- 'Asthma & Health Scrutiny' - a guide for Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- Support papers and background information on various possible topics
- Access to literature, research, IT resources and specialist staff
- asthma.org.uk



asthma.org.uk