

PRESS RELEASE

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Contract signed marking bright new future for Bedfordshire & Luton Mental Health Trust

A bright new future has today been assured for Bedfordshire & Luton Mental Health and Social Care Partnership NHS Trust (BLPT) as the much anticipated new transfer contract is signed; the first acquisition of its kind.

South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT) was announced in September as the preferred bidder, following a groundbreaking competition for BLPT. SEPT is set to take over the management of the Trust on 1 April 2010. A mobilisation plan is now being implemented to ready staff, patients and carers for the new arrangements.

Sir Neil McKay, Chief Executive of NHS East of England, said:

“We are absolutely delighted that this historic contract has been signed, as it marks an exciting new dawn for partnership working in the NHS. The proposal underwent a detailed and extended external approval process. This has now been completed and we’re ready to go”.

Andrew Morgan, Chief Executive of NHS Bedfordshire, which commissions services from BLPT said:

“This is an excellent development for patients in Bedfordshire and Luton. We are confident that the quality of care provided will be improved as a result of this contract and that services will be shaped to respond to specific local needs. We look forward to working with everyone involved.”

Alison Davis, BLPT Chair, said

“The acquisition by such an experienced NHS organisation is the best and right option for the staff and the organisation as a whole. I am pleased that a solution which delivers a sustainable future for BLPT has been reached so speedily. We will now have the freedoms that come with Foundation Trust status, and will be able to develop more flexible and innovative services. Local people will now have much more say in how these services are provided and delivered”.

Dr Patrick Geoghegan, Chief Executive of SEPT said:

“I am absolutely delighted that we have completed the approvals and checking process successfully. Now we are ready to move ahead and take forward our challenging agenda for improving quality and value for money, while really engaging with our local communities”.

Notes for editors

1. Before contracts could be exchanged, a detailed external approvals and advice process needed to be completed by Monitor (the independent regulator of Foundation Trusts), the Department of Health Transaction Board and the NHS Co-operation and Competition Panel (CCP).
2. BLPT provides mental health, learning disability, substance misuse and social care for the 600,000 residents of Bedfordshire and Luton. BLPT's Board put itself up for merger with an established NHS organisation to help develop services and

bring the benefits of NHS Foundation Trust status to the local community. NHS Foundation Trusts have greater freedoms to manage their own affairs and improve services.

3. NHS East of England's Strategic Projects Team of experts works in partnership with NHS organisations to develop and deliver positive change in financially and operationally challenged NHS services in the East of England. Working closely with all the stakeholders involved in each project, the team develops, supports and delivers transactions that drive up the quality of patient experience, safety and care, clinical excellence, public service and value for money.

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