

PRESS RELEASE

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Bright future ahead for local NHS community health services

The county's two Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) - NHS Bedfordshire and NHS Luton - are working together to find new NHS organisations to run their community health services from April 2011.

The two PCTs invited carefully selected NHS organisations to express an interest in the future management of Luton Community Services and Bedfordshire Community Health Services. The following three have been shortlisted, after careful scrutiny, to take over the running of the two community health services:

- Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust
- Luton and Dunstable Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

The move follows the Department of Health's 'Transforming Community Services' programme which will see all PCTs transferring their community health services to a partner NHS organisation in an effort to improve choice for patients. Currently, PCTs not only commission some services, buying them for the local community, but also provide some services. The changes will introduce more variety and competition into community services provision, thereby driving up quality.

Andrew Morgan, Chief Executive of NHS Bedfordshire, said: "The transfer is an 'as is' transfer and thereafter there will be ongoing work with staff, patients and commissioners to continue to modernise and transform community health services to improve the quality of care for local residents."

Angela McNab, Chief Executive of NHS Luton, added: “We are determined to see Luton Community Services well settled and embedded in a new organisation before PCTs are wound down in April 2013.”

A project board has been set up to drive forward the initiative and is being supported by NHS East of England’s Strategic Projects Team.

Representatives from staff, patient and community groups are being given a chance to have their say. A ‘reference group of stakeholders’ has been set up so they can contribute their experience to the process. In addition, key local representatives sit on the Project Board, ensuring the voices of patients and staff are heard by those leading the project. Everyone with an interest is being asked to input their thoughts, queries and suggestions at www.eoe.nhs.uk/strategicprojects or by calling freephone 0800 923 3001.

Roger Moyse, Chief Operating Officer for Bedfordshire Community Health Services, said: “This is an exciting opportunity for us to spread our wings, while remaining within the NHS family. The new working partnership will mean knowledge, skills and experiences will be shared, which will undoubtedly lead to a benefit for patients.”

Dr Chris White, Chief Operating Officer for Luton Community Services, added: “Our staff will remain NHS employees and will transfer over to their new organisations on their current terms and conditions; this stability is obviously good news for them and provides important continuity for our patients too.”

To express interest, each organisation had to complete a detailed questionnaire, evidencing their quality of services, experience of providing community services and how well they manage their staff and their finances. The three shortlisted will now go through to the next stage of the selection process.

A preferred provider(s) is due to be identified by November this year. Their appointment will be subject to a series of robust internal and external assessments and approvals. By February 2011, the NHS provider, or providers, taking over the management of the

community services will be confirmed. A smooth transition of staff and services will then begin ahead of the formal transfer in April 2011.

For further information visit www.eoe.nhs.uk/strategicprojects (follow the community services tab) or telephone 0800 923 3001.

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Notes for editors

1. NHS Luton and NHS Bedfordshire have embarked on what is known as a 'managed dialogue process', and only NHS organisations are being asked to put in proposals. The process is a restricted competition hence only NHS organisations have been invited to take part.
2. The Transforming Community Services programme was announced in January 2009. (Transforming Community Services - enabling new patterns of provision. Department of Health -13 January 2009). It has not been delayed by the White Paper (Equity and excellence: liberating the NHS. Department of Health 12 July 2010), instead it has been given additional importance, hence work on the programme is continuing as planned.
3. NHS Luton is the NHS organisation that plans and pays for NHS healthcare for people in the borough of Luton. We know that there are health inequalities in Luton; and although the risks vary, some groups are at greater risk of ill health than others. Our aim is to improve the health of Luton and reduce those health inequalities. Our concern is with people, lifestyles, culture and environment. We work closely with our partners in health and social care across Luton and South Bedfordshire in order to improve health and social well-being. Together, we can achieve more than we can on our own.

NHS Bedfordshire manages the NHS money spent on health care in Bedfordshire, using public funding to assess needs, plan services, fund care, deliver patient satisfaction and assure quality. As leader of the NHS in Bedfordshire, its overall aim is to secure a real improvement in the health of local people, deliver a better patient experience and reduce unfairness in health. It achieves this through partnership with primary care professionals, other NHS organisations and with local authority colleagues, independent providers and voluntary organisations.

4. The Strategic Projects Team is directed by NHS East of England's Dr Stephen Dunn, Director of Strategy, and led by Andrew MacPherson, Director of Strategic Projects. This team of experts works in partnership to develop and deliver positive change for NHS services in the east of England. Working closely with the healthcare marketplace and the stakeholders, it develops, supports and delivers transactions that drive up the quality of patient experience, safety and care, clinical excellence, public service and value for money. The SPT also worked to broker the take over of Bedfordshire and Luton Mental Health and Social Care Partnership NHS Trust (BLPT) by South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT) earlier this year.

The NHS Luton and NHS Bedfordshire Community Health Services project 10 key facts
1. The overall aim of the project is to identify and transfer services to a new NHS provider that, over time, will transform community services to drive up quality and deliver value for money for taxpayers.
2. A new NHS provider is being sought for Bedfordshire Community Health Services and for Luton Community Services, either separately or together.
3. Its "business as usual" during the project.
4. The process to become the new provider is open to NHS organisations only. It will be fair, open and transparent.
5. Staff will remain firmly within the NHS, with all their terms and conditions preserved and protected under current NHS legislation.
6. This is not a service reconfiguration.
7. On day one of the transfer, patients will continue to receive their usual NHS services, by the same staff and from the same locations, as this is an "as is" transfer of staff and services.
8. Key stakeholders representatives from staff and the local communities will be involved throughout the process.
9. NHS Bedfordshire and NHS Luton will no longer directly provide community health services. This is a process that is happening to NHS community services across the country, in line with the Department of Health's national guidance for Transforming Community Services.
10. This divestment is a completely separate process from current service development and improvement work within Bedfordshire Community Health Services and Luton Community Services.