

PRESS RELEASE

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South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT) takes over Bedfordshire and Luton Partnership NHS Trust (BLPT)

The final go ahead for South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT) to take over Bedfordshire and Luton Mental Health and Social Care Partnership NHS Trust (BLPT) was given this week ⁽¹⁾. The new expanded SEPT will come into force from 1 April 2010.

The move is the first ever of its kind in the NHS and is the result of a unique acquisition process. BLPT's Board decided, in January 2009, to find an established NHS organisation to help develop local services and bring the benefits of NHS Foundation Trust (FT) status to the local community. The new management arrangements will make the Trust more independent and accountable to the local community, and will improve quality for service users.

"The rationale for the change was simple," said Dr Stephen Dunn, Director of Strategy at NHS East of England. "It benefits local NHS mental health services in Bedfordshire by providing not only the security, freedoms and local accountability that come with FT status, but also the opportunity to develop innovation and services."

Andrew MacPherson, Director of NHS East of England's Strategic Projects Team which led the competition process, said: "SEPT had to compete with other NHS organisations to demonstrate firmly that it was best placed to take over BLPT. The proposal and

process underwent a detailed external approval and checking process from a wide range of bodies including the Department of Health, Monitor, the Co-operation and Competition Panel, user and carer representatives and staff. We would like to thank all the parties involved for their enthusiasm and commitment for driving this acquisition forward. Innovation was key, in the designing of the process, the treatment of its stages, and the bids we received. Our focus was on ensuring all our energy went into producing the best possible outcome for the users of BLPT.”

Andrew Morgan, Chief Executive of NHS Bedfordshire, which is the main, of five, commissioners of mental health, learning disabilities and social care services in Bedfordshire said: “This move is right for the patients of Bedfordshire and Luton. It has been an invaluable exercise in communication and co-operation across those of us who commission services in the area. Together we are better placed to meet the diverse needs of Bedfordshire and Luton’s communities.”

Alison Davis, BLPT Chair, said: “We have had a detailed integration plan in place for several months now, and we are pleased to finally move on to this new management arrangement with SEPT. It is the right solution for our service users, our staff and the organisation as a whole. We will now be able to develop more and better services, and service users and carers will have much more say about their delivery.”

Dr Patrick Geoghegan OBE, Chief Executive of SEPT said: “We are all really looking forward to implementing new and exciting ideas for our services across Bedfordshire, Essex and Luton. The staff have an enormous breadth of skills and experience between them, and together they are enthusiastically developing the services we offer our service users and carers.”

⁽¹⁾ The Secretary of State orders which transferred all BLPT’s assets and liabilities to SEPT and dissolved BLPT were published yesterday (22 March).

Notes for editors

- The BLPT 'Project Handover' has been directed by NHS East of England's Dr Stephen Dunn, Director of Strategy and managed by the Strategic Projects Team led by Andrew MacPherson, Director of Strategic Projects. This team of specialists works in partnership to develop and deliver positive change for NHS services in the east of England. Working closely with the healthcare marketplace and 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.
- BLPT provided NHS mental health, learning disability and social care services for the 600,000 residents of Bedfordshire and Luton.
- SEPT provides NHS health and social care services for people with mental health problems and people with learning disabilities in south Essex, covering a population of around 725,000. It also delivers forensic mental health services for the whole of Essex.

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