

Community Services Integration

Background: Why we are changing who runs community health services?

Under national guidance from the Department of Health, by April 2011 all Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) have to arrange for a new organisation to manage the community health services which the PCTs until now have managed themselves. The coalition Government has given PCTs a new option of exploring an NHS Community Foundation Trust (CFT) model for managing community health services.

The PCTs locally (NHS Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire County PCT) are keen to explore the potential of setting up a CFT. The new organisation would continue to be based in local communities, with the current community health staff - district nurses, community hospital nurses etc, delivering care and working closely with local GPs. It has the potential to focus completely on providing local patient care with greater involvement from staff – but it would remain an NHS organisation.

Consultation and engagement so far

NHS Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire County PCT have already, separately, conducted some staff, partner and public engagement. This has involved LINKs, Patient Participation Groups, staff side representatives, plus the Local Authority Board observer, in the first stage of its work on 'Transforming Community Services'.

In early spring 2010, four organisations interested in taking on the running of the PCTs' provider services presented to the PCTs' Boards, and the stakeholder/patient representatives mentioned above. The conclusion was that three of the four interested organisations were invited to provide further information and continue to develop their proposals further.

There was further stakeholder engagement in the second stage through a series of staff focus groups, a staff ballot, and a public/patient focus group including Links and Patient Participation Group members.

Some staff expressed concerns about the social enterprise option, which was then being considered, especially because it was outside the NHS and raised questions about pensions for new staff. (At this stage, Community NHS Trust was not a nationally available option). These concerns were shared by a larger number of Shropshire County employees than NHS Telford and Wrekin employees.

Patients were more evenly balanced in favour of either the social enterprise option or integration of both PCTs' provider services with Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust. The main points important to them in any integration were that the new provider must demonstrate scope for innovation and improvement in the quality of patient services, that services felt 'joined up' for patients and that the management of staff through change was handled well, so the quality of patient services was not destabilised during change.

The views expressed, especially by staff, influenced the direction taken by the PCT when the new option of Staff Membership Community Foundation Trusts was made available by the new Coalition Government. This offered the benefits of the service model of the social enterprise – i.e. locally – based community health services working closely with GPs, but overcoming staff concerns by being part of the NHS.

NHS Telford and Wrekin had previously undertaken a greater amount of staff engagement at an early stage. Following a series of recent Shropshire County staff engagement events, both PCTs are now at the same stage, with staff, Boards, local authorities and user networks informed about the current direction of travel, the stage of development, the next steps and timetable. The PCTs, through the Project Team, are now working closely together on their joined-up engagement and communications activities.

Next steps for public and partner consultation and engagement

Our engagement will consist of a period of written consultation allowing the wider public to find out more and comment, running alongside a series of engagement events on specific topics. The latter are designed to gather views and help shape particular parts of the integration proposals as we work on them.

The programme will include:

- a) Briefing the scrutiny committees for Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire and taking a paper to the joint HOSC. Progress reports will be provided as per point b) below, and a further analysis and evaluation paper will be taken back to the at the end of the year.
- b) Update letters to all key stakeholders at key milestones, including launch of consultation, PCT Boards consider Integrated Business Plan (IBP), SHA feeds back on IBP, Transaction Board and CCP feedback.
- c) Two half day pre-consultation engagement events, with an invited group of approx 20 service users or representatives:

Event One

Wednesday 22 September 2010

9.00am until 1.00pm

The Bentley Suite, Telford Whitehouse Hotel

Event Two

Monday 4 October 2010

1.30pm to 5.00pm

Wrekin Suite, ProStar Stadium, Oteley Road, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ST

- d) Written consultation 11 October to 17 December (10 weeks) , supported by meetings proactively arranged in advance with stakeholders; public drop in sessions in Telford, Shrewsbury, Whitchurch for North Shropshire and Ludlow for South Shropshire.

Further information

NHS Telford and Wrekin would like to ensure that key partners are fully informed with regard to the process and progress of the pre-consultation and consultation engagement activities. PCT staff are available to attend meetings and events as required,