

Public Summary – September 2017

Proposal for Bedford Hospital NHS Trust and Luton & Dunstable University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to merge

What is this about?

Bedford Hospital and Luton & Dunstable (L&D) Hospitals are considering a proposal to join forces and become a single Foundation Trust. By working together in this way, they will be able to provide the best possible patient care and services to the increasing local population.

It is an exciting opportunity to address some of the challenges facing our local hospitals and will mean that key services such as A&E, maternity and paediatrics will remain in both hospitals.

Why Bedford Hospital and L&D Hospital?

Work has been ongoing to explore opportunities for closer integration between the hospitals across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes footprint as part of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) that began last year. As the two hospitals in the county of Bedfordshire they have a long track record of working together and there are many examples of current services already being provided in partnership. They are also part of the STP serving the same population, with the same ambulance service and many other existing networks.

This merger will build and strengthen this existing partnership, while streamlining the way that care is provided and removing inefficiencies and overlap.

What challenges will this address?

Our local NHS staff work hard to provide safe, compassionate, quality care for local people – but our populations' needs are changing and we need to adapt the way we provide services to support this. We have a growing and ageing population which is putting increased pressure on local services, particularly our hospitals. As with many other areas across the country we are finding it difficult to recruit and retain staff. For some areas of specialist care, we do not have enough doctors and nurses to consistently deliver the best quality services across multiple hospital sites, especially given the increasing requirement to run services 7 days a week.

This proposal provides an opportunity for our hospitals to work more closely together so they can share scarce resources, reduce duplication where possible and provide local people with the best quality care.

How will this happen?

The proposal is to create a single organisation, management and clinical team, working together for the best outcomes for the people of Bedfordshire. It will ensure best practices and sharing of specialist staff expertise which will result in better care for patients. It will also create more opportunities for staff by expanding and improving the range and quality of services available, as well as generating efficiencies by working as a more integrated, larger organisation, helping our services become more sustainable.

Some guiding principles for working together as one organisation

In bringing together Bedford and Luton & Dunstable Hospital as a single organisation, some guiding principles have been agreed for the delivery of local services:

- Every effort will be made to treat people in their local hospital – inpatient and outpatient
- There will be one advice and guidance service covering both locations
- Ambulances would liaise with the hospitals to see which is best placed to receive patients to ensure they are making the right decision for patients at that time
- Clinical teams will provide a single service across two (or more) sites

Under this new way of working there will be better access to [specialist care 24/7](#) across the whole of Bedfordshire, with specialists working as part of one team rotating between sites. Corporate services such as IT, finance, HR and others would support both hospitals. Key services such as A&E, consultant-led maternity services and children’s services will remain at both hospitals, with additional support out of hours for higher risk emergencies provided by L&D. Ambulances would work with both hospitals to get patients to the best location for treatment and [specialty centres for non-emergencies](#) would be established at both sites.

What will be the benefits?

One of the greatest benefits of bringing the two hospitals together will be having access to the best each has to offer – people, technology and innovation. Working together, they will be able to make changes which have a positive impact on the services provided to patients, and continue to meet the needs of the growing and ageing population of Bedfordshire.

Some of the ways that they expect to be able to do this include:

- [Reducing the need for patients to have to travel out of county by bringing services back into Bedfordshire.](#) For example, plastic surgery or specialist cardiac imaging.
- [More choice for patients to receive local care through a single booking process](#)
- [Improved working with emergency services to get patients to the nearest site](#)
- [Better integration with community services, resulting in less hospital admissions](#)
- [Creating single specialist services across the two hospitals eg, gastroenterology, elective orthopaedics and gynaecology which will help to improve access to specialist input resulting in better outcomes](#)

As well as providing certainty for residents in Bedfordshire that their key services will continue to be available locally at both sites, this will [create real opportunities to attract and retain](#) staff to the area. For patients, it should mean shorter waiting times, a broader range of specialist services and more joined up, integrated care.

Although the potential financial benefits are not the main reason for this proposed union, bringing the two hospitals together [could save more than £13 million by the end of year 5.](#)

Timings and next steps

The timetable for such a collaboration is largely dependent on the requirements of national regulators NHS England, NHS Improvement and the CMA. The management teams recognise that these timings are ambitious however this is considered to be in everyone’s best interest and we want to create certainty for staff and patients as quickly as possible.



are proposed timings and may be subject to change.