**Bedford and Luton and Dunstable Hospitals - Pathology Services Merger**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

Following the announcement of the proposal to merge Bedford Hospital and Luton & Dunstable University Hospital Pathology Departments, we have collated a list of the most frequently asked questions to help better inform GP stakeholders. If you have any additional questions or comments about the Pathology merger please contact Pathology Managing Director [**charlotte.mustoe@ldh.nhs.uk**](mailto:charlotte.mustoe@ldh.nhs.uk)

**Q: Where can we learn more about the Pathology Merger?  
A:** To learn more about this Pathology merger and access more information about the impact it will have on your pathology services, including updated FAQs, details of changes to reference ranges and important changes to existing pathology processes, please visit our dedicated Pathology Merger webpage [**www.ldh.nhs.uk/gps-professionals/pathology-merger**](http://www.ldh.nhs.uk/gps-professionals/pathology-merger)  
Information can also be found in the ‘L&D Community’ quarterly GP newsletter in January 2020 which is emailed and posted to all GPs in Luton and Beds CCGs

**Q: Will the test requesting process on ICE change?  
A:** There will be no change to your ICE access and panels. However, there may be some minor changes to the display of contents. We are working through the changes and testing ICE to identify and communicate these changes. However, there will be no changes to licensing and what you can access. Results, no matter where originated or tested, will go back to the requestor.

**Q: Will my courier collection change?**

**A:** We are currently re-tendering the courier collection service and the specification requires a collection late morning, and one in the afternoon. Any changes to the existing route to make for a more efficient collection service will be communicated well in advance to any practices affected.

**Q: What is the timeline for the consolidation of pathology services onto one site?**

**A:** The pathology services will merge on the 1st of April 2020. However, the physical transfer of pathology services will be via a phased process over a period of 18 months as detailed below. Sufficient resources will be put in place before any consolidation work begins.

On April 1, 2020

Both L&D and Bedford laboratories will formally merge along with all their staff. Both labs will share an information system but very few other changes are initially planned other than Immunology being centralised at the L&D and some other small volume tests redirected. All changes will be communicated to all users of the Pathology service prior to changes being implemented.

April 2020 onwards

Consolidation of Primary care blood sample transport to the L&D, implementation due to be completed by December 2020. Blood Sciences Hub to be at L&D, and Bedford will have a smaller lab as a result. All inpatient and out-patient work will be carried out on the site it is requested on. Tests currently referred elsewhere will be consolidated/repatriated.

To be completed by March 2021

All microbiology tests to be delivered from Bedford Hospital.

To be completed by September 2021

The consolidation of Pathology across L&D and BHT is planned to take up to three years. Histopathology **processing** will be consolidated once it is safe and efficient to do so. It is envisaged that consultant histopathologists will continue reporting from their existing sites. No changes will be implemented that might adversely affect the 62 day pathway. It is expected that the transfer of services will be fully implemented by September 2021.

**Q: Will the merger impact on existing working relationships between the two labs?**

**A:** The merged service will retain the same functional and effective working relationships between Bedford and L&D labs, which they have worked hard to develop.

**Q: Who are the named contacts leading on this project?**

**A:** The project is being delivered by senior teams of clinicians and managers across both Trusts, led by Dr Danielle Freedman [L&D], Dr Fraser Mutch [BHT], Charlotte Mustoe, Kevin Nulty and Neil Cully.

**Q: What will the new merged laboratory service be called?  
A:** The Luton and Bedford Pathology Services. This new name will come into effect when both Trusts and their pathology laboratories formally merge on the 1st April 2020.

**Q: Will there be any clinical implications for GPs arising from the pathology merger?**

**A:** Initially, there will be no change to the repertoire of tests currently provided to BCCG GPs. The merged NHS service will be working closely with the CCGs to improve the service and implement funded changes. Our aim will be to provide equality of access across Bedfordshire.

**Q: Will changes to pathology equipment/protocols impact on existing test reference ranges?**

**A:** Whenever possible, the same analysers and protocols will be used across both sites. All changes will be communicated well in advance to the users. Changes to tests, units and reference ranges will also be notified based on comments underneath the result in ICE and in the printed report.

**Q: Do you have a clinical communication plan in place?**

**A:** Clinical interpretation will differ based on the tests being used. Clinical communication will be managed through information in ICE, the Bedford website and existing methods of communication with users such as the Customer Liaison Manager. We have already commenced discussions with specific clinicians and groups to seek their views about proposed changes and we will continue to discuss potential changes nearer the time.

**Q: Will there be a Pathology Lab User Group forum in place to gather service user feedback and suggestions as part of the Pathology merger?**

**A:** There is a long-standing Pathology Lab User Group at Bedford and it is planned to extend this forum to all primary care users of Pathology services at Bedford and L&D Hospitals. If you are a primary care colleague and wish to contribute or take part in this forum please contact [**charlotte.mustoe@ldh.nhs.uk**](mailto:charlotte.mustoe@ldh.nhs.uk)