

PRESS RELEASE

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The next steps for the future of Worcestershire hospitals

Over the last 16 months, NHS in Worcestershire has completed a Joint Services Review in order to redesign acute hospital services in the county. The aim of the project was to make recommendations, supported by local clinicians, for a future model of hospital care in the area which is both clinically sustainable and financially viable.

In March, a firm proposal was reached that the focus of the changes would be on Accident & Emergency (A&E) and women's and children's services and would involve looking at centralising consultant-led maternity services, overnight children's services and full A&E services on the Worcestershire Royal Hospital site. This decision marked the completion of the JSR process.

Local Clinical Commissioning Groups have now taken over responsibility from NHS Worcestershire and, alongside NHS England, are now responsible for the next steps of this work which will take forward these agreed principles. This approach puts local GPs firmly at the heart of the work to provide safe and sustainable services for Worcestershire's patients.

Two options are being considered as to how the proposed clinical model may be progressed, option 1 and 2. A short review is being undertaken of option 1 to refine and update the proposals. Option 2 is being developed by all three CCGs, with NHS Wyre Forest CCG and NHS South Worcestershire CCG working with Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust to quickly develop the clinical and financial framework. NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove will be exploring how it takes forward option 2. Initially NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove CCG will work with local stakeholders on a 'prospectus', setting out the range of services required locally.

In developing these options, it is important that appropriate governance arrangements are put in place to ensure that the public and stakeholders can have faith in a robust, open and transparent process. In particular the process needs to fully comply with the relevant NHS policies and the CCGs need to work through due process with regards to contestability, competition and procurement law.

Dr Carl Ellson, Dr Simon Gates and Dr Jonathan Wells, the Clinical Leads of NHS South Worcestershire CCG, NHS Wyre Forest CCG and NHS Redditch and Bromsgrove CCG, have issued a joint statement saying:

"All three local CCGs are committed to working together to ensure that decision processes are sound, that local people have access to the widest possible range of services, and that these services represent value for money and are clinically and financially sustainable into the future. As part of our on-going work, we will be making arrangements to explain the next steps in more detail in order to receive public feedback."

"The expectation is that this work will be completed in the summer after which there will be a public engagement exercise prior to formal public consultation later in the year. We understand that it is frustrating that the process is taking a long time but these are very complex issues and it is important that we get the process and decisions right for the people of Worcestershire"

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Notes for Editors

The Joint Services Review was initiated in January 2012 to look at how high quality, safe and affordable acute hospital services by Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust could be sustained into the future. At the end of this project, in March 2013, a clinical model for how future services could be provided was recommended to NHS Worcestershire by Worcestershire's Clinical Senate. Under the proposals the vast majority of health care services would continue to be delivered locally. Some services would be centralised to improve patient treatments and outcomes, in particular some A&E, complex consultant led maternity services and inpatient children's services.

From 1 April 2013, responsibilities for commissioning local health services changed from NHS Worcestershire to local Clinical Commissioning Groups. The county's three Clinical Commissioning Groups are now working together to look at the options for delivering the proposed clinical model. One option being investigated in detail would see Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust continuing to run all three hospital sites, while a second option would look for alternative local NHS providers at the Alexandra Hospital site. No decisions will be made before a full public consultation process has been completed.

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