

‘Well Connected’ selected as Department of Health pioneer

A Worcestershire programme to transform health and social care for patients in the county has been named a national pioneer by the Department of Health.

On Friday, Care Minister Norman Lamb announced that the county’s Well Connected programme had been named as one of just 14 ambitious initiatives the Government has selected to “blaze a trail for change” by pioneering new ways of delivering co-ordinated or more joined up care.

Well Connected aims to ‘join up your health and care’ – helping the people of Worcestershire to ‘be well and stay well’, be involved in planning their own care and improve the overall experience and coordination of the services they receive.

Well Connected was chosen as a pioneer by an internationally renowned panel of experts drawing together global expertise and experience of how good joined up care works in practice. It was launched earlier this year and brings together all the local health and social care providers alongside local commissioners and voluntary groups with the aim of making the often complex health and care system work in a more joined up way for the benefit of patients. Well Connected joins together these groups in one place creating the opportunity to develop plans as a whole system, agree priorities and the best way to tackle the significant challenges within health and social care.

The aim of the programme is to provide coordinated care where the needs and priorities of patients, families and carers are at the centre of the planning process, improving the quality and experience of care they receive. It seeks to facilitate truly transformational and revolutionary changes in the way health and care in the county is resourced, with the emphasis shifting towards personal responsibility, prevention and community based services, empowering people to be supported at home and avoiding issues escalating into crises through earlier intervention. This allows our hospital services the capacity to provide more timely acute care for those who need it and minimize the time patients need to stay in hospital, away from their homes and families.

Being a pioneer will mean the Well Connected programme will benefit from further Government support and advice which will help it continue to turn its visions into reality.

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International experts in integrated care will act as critical friends, suggesting areas where more could be done and helping highlight other things which could be introduced. Well Connected already drives a number of projects, for example Virtual Wards which identifies people at particular risk and wraps support around them at home before their conditions deteriorates to a point where more intensive support is needed. Other projects seeks to reduce length of stays in hospital, to better equip people to remain safe at home and to better signpost people to support so they can take more responsibility of theirs and their family's health. More on these are available on the Well Connected website: www.wellconnectedworcestershire.co.uk

Well Connected in action:

A lady has MS, which means her mobility is severely restricted. She has had several falls at home and in the past has ended up in hospital, sometimes for many weeks at a time. Although she is well cared for by the staff she hates being in hospital; it's difficult for family to visit her and she can't wait to get home.

Earlier this month she fell in her living room and badly cut her leg. She has now has a call alarm which she pressed and an ambulance crew were dispatched. In the past she would have been sent off to the hospital, however this time crew got in touch with the local Enhanced Care Team. This is a team run by the local community NHS Trust (Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust) which supports people at home when there's a crisis. A member of the team visited, assessed her and arranged with colleagues from social care to find a placement in a residential setting. She stayed there for a few nights to recover before returning home.

The benefits were that she avoided a potentially lengthy hospital stay which would have added to the demands in the local acute trust. Instead the professionals were Well Connected with each other and instead of the default acute admission setting they were able to provide her with a more suitable outcome. She said she was unaware that these options even existed, she said in her experience an ambulance arrives and you go to hospital where you stay until your fit enough to return home. She said the stay in the residential setting helped her recover quicker and get home sooner. This example involved the ambulance trust, the community trust and social care working together to improve the experience of the patient and avoid an unnecessary admission to hospital.

Dr Bernie Gregory, the Clinical Lead for Well Connected said: "We know that there are very many dedicated and experienced people working in the NHS and in social care with high levels of expertise but the system in place isn't always conducive to providing care and support which puts the patient and their priorities at the centre. Often the patient has to find their way round complicated and disjointed services, so they do not end up with the

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services that fit with them. There are undoubtedly challenges to be overcome but there is a real drive in Worcestershire to transform the way care is provided, and we are delighted that the Well Connected programme has been recognised as a shining example of what might be possible. The people of Worcestershire are going to be at the forefront of groundbreaking developments to improve the care they receive.”

Peter Pinfield, Chair of Healthwatch Worcestershire, the local patient champion for health and care services, said Well Connected pioneer status was really important to patients and service users across Worcestershire: “This is a tremendous opportunity for health and social care services here in the county to improve the lives for not only patients and carers, but also for ordinary folk who depend upon those very services for a safe and good quality of life every day. It is a ‘win-win’ for health and care organisations and the public. The professional and organisational barriers will finally have to come down in Worcestershire and we now earned the opportunity to show what can be done in a positive and practical way to improve service delivery”.

Integrating health and care services is national Government policy and the pioneer scheme has been established by the Department of Health to highlight best practice and to inspire other areas to develop similar local initiatives.

Norman Lamb, Care and Support Minister, said: “Too often care is uncoordinated, leaving too many people needlessly entering the revolving door of their local A&E again and again, because somewhere in the system their care has broken down. We have heard people talk about integration before, but it has never truly taken hold across the NHS. These pioneers are a starting gun for the NHS and social care to achieve a common goal – to get local health and care services working together, not separately, in the interests of the people that they all serve. However, this is just the start – we want to make integrated care the norm across the country and planning has already begun in order to invest £3.8bn into integrated health and care services in 2015/16. We need to preserve the NHS, and through an integrated approach we can achieve better results for patients and make the money go further, whilst making necessary savings. These fourteen pioneers will test new ways of working for everyone to learn from, and drive forward genuine change for the future.”

Invite to press briefing:

A press briefing is being organised for early next (details to be confirmed) to find out more about Well Connected and its role as a national pioneer. Please confirm your interest in advance by contacting Gary Morgan, Head of Communications at Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust, on 01905 733632 or via email@ gary.morgan@hacw.nhs.uk

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Notes to Editors:

The Well Connected programme brings together all the local NHS organisations (Worcestershire Acute NHS Trust, Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust and the Clinical Commissioning Groups), Worcestershire County Council and key representatives from the voluntary sector. Together we aim to better join up and co-ordinate health and care for people and support them to stay healthy, recover quickly following an illness and ensure that care and treatment is received in the most appropriate place. It is hoped this will lead to a reduction in avoidable hospital admissions and the length of time people who are admitted to hospital need to stay there.

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Worcestershire Health and Care 
NHS Trust



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