

February 2020 – Edition 10

Stakeholder update on the merger of Bedford Hospital and Luton and Dunstable Hospital (L&D)

We continue to progress steadily with our plans to merge to create a single Foundation Trust on 1 April 2020. Staff from both hospitals have been working extremely hard to ensure we stay on target with plans and according to the timeline we set last year. The good news is we have now submitted the Full Business Case (FBC) to NHS England / NHS Improvement with the final approvals process currently underway.

Our integration plan for Day One has been completed and our two year integration plan is updated fortnightly at the Joint Integration Board. Plans to further integrate our digital systems are going well and we will have integrated our pathology IT systems by 1 April to facilitate the development of a single service across both sites.

Various staff engagement activity is currently taking place across both hospital sites to ensure staff remain updated on plans and involved in the process to help shape the future of the new Trust.

Public engagement is also a priority for the Trusts and as part of the plans to merge it is important to inform and engage with all stakeholders about these plans. The public are an important stakeholder group and as such, we held an event in each of the key Bedfordshire locations – Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton – back in December to inform and update them of the merger plans and most importantly give them the opportunity to ask members of both Executive Teams any questions they had about the process.

These events allowed us the opportunity to remind the local community why the merger has been proposed, what we see as the benefits and how our plans are progressing.

As with previous briefing sessions held in 2017, there were similar themes that were coming through all three sessions in terms of the questions people had about the merger process, the new organisation and areas of concern. Many were reassured by the commitment to keep core services locally and our aims to build on the existing successful partnership between Bedford and the L&D. Many questions were asked and answered, with the key themes being whether patients would have to travel further, plans to change services, the financial impact and whether future population growth had been considered.

The most popular questions asked and how these were addressed at the three briefing sessions are summarised below.

Key questions / concerns raised

Theme	Concern	How they were addressed
Travel	Will patients have to travel further to access hospital services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By keeping core services on both sites this means that over 95% of services will still be accessible locally. When we talk about more clinical collaborative working, we are discussing this in terms of specialist services which involve a small number of patients. For e.g. looking at a

Theme	Concern	How they were addressed
		<p>specific example in orthopaedics in elbow replacements – a patient will continue to have all of their outpatient / diagnostic appointments at their local hospital but may have the actual operation on the other site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have stated in original plans back in 2017 that we anticipate minimal impact on patients having to travel further for treatment – our position remains the same.
Service changes	What will happen to specific services e.g. radiology, pathology – will I still be able to access them locally?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core services will remain on both sites. Where there are specialist services with relatively small numbers of patients (such as early pregnancy) and there is currently only capacity to provide services Monday to Friday at each site, we are exploring the possibility of extending service provision to seven days by working across both sites • This merger also presents an opportunity to bring services back into Bedfordshire and back into the NHS. In current arrangements, pathology services are provided in-house in Luton and are outsourced to a private organisation in Bedford. As of 1 April 2020, Pathology services will be brought back into the NHS and will be an in-house integrated service working across both hospital sites • There are no plans to make any significant changes to service provision • If there was a proposal to significantly change services by moving or closing them after the merger, which is highly unlikely, then this would need to go through the formal legal public consultation process. Being one organisation does not make it easier to change service provision.
The need to increase capacity on both sites	How can the merger be successful if both hospitals can't improve capacity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both hospitals are currently facing operational challenges in terms of the constant busyness of both sites, increased admissions and delayed discharges. • There are a significant amount of patients who are in hospital that could be cared for more effectively in the community • Addressing this issue isn't necessarily done by increasing the capacity of the hospital sites and adding more inpatient beds – it's more about working more closely with our community and primary health care partners to ensure the system works more collaboratively. This will ensure that patients receive healthcare at the right time and in the right setting.
Development plans	How will this impact on current and future development plans for the hospitals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Trust will continue to implement their existing operational and strategic plans however they will work together to ensure that any developments will also benefit the merger • The L&D is currently planning to build a new five storey acute services block • Bedford Hospital's Three Year Plan highlights significant

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		<p>developments such as improvements to IT systems, new CT scanners, a new Learning & Education Centre for staff and students, the development of a new Theatre and improving children's A&E.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These and other projects will continue.
Financial challenges	How will the merger address current challenges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This merger is not tactical but strategic, meaning we are not merging to address clinical inadequacies or a financial black hole. Although finances are an important factor of the merger plans, the focus of this merger is to create a sustainable Foundation Trust providing the best hospital services for patients and to create better opportunities for staff.
Funding allocation	Clarity on how the funding was allocated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The merger has always been reliant on the capital funding bid approval in order to realise the full benefits of the proposed plans. Official feedback on the outcome of the capital funding request was significantly delayed but the required approval was received in Aug/Sept 2019 which allowed us to re-start plans • The recent capital funding bid approval of £99.5m was for the L&D Hospital. This means the L&D can proceed with the delivery of a new five storey acute services block at the Luton site to enable urgent replacement of some of the site's most outdated estate. This is incredibly important and necessary to patient and staff experience by delivering new facilities for critical care, maternity services, the level 3 neo-natal intensive care unit (NICU) and operating theatres. This essential redevelopment to the L&D site will allow the full benefits of the merger to be realised which always formed part of the original proposal.

We are committed to continuing this engagement leading up to the April merger date and beyond with the next Public Briefing Session scheduled to take place:

Tuesday 3 March – 6pm to 7pm
The Rufus Centre, Flitwick MK45 1AH

It would be very helpful for us (especially for refreshments purposes) if you could register your attendance by dropping an email to either communications@bedfordhospital.nhs.uk or communications@ldh.nhs.uk alternatively you can call us on 01234 792687 or 01582 718290.

We would also be grateful if you could share this date through your organisation's communications channels to help achieve optimal attendance at the session.

Why not become a member?

As a Foundation Trust we will be accountable to our local community. As the merger plans progress, we are looking to expand the Foundation Trust membership to include people across the whole of Bedfordshire and surrounding counties to ensure our membership represents the population both hospital sites serves. It is free and easy to become a member and you can influence the way your local hospital is run. Anyone who is 16yrs or over and live in Bedfordshire or surrounding counties can register for membership. To find out more and apply please visit www.ldh.nhs.uk

Governors – What they do and how you can become one

As a member, you will hear about the important role that Governors play but you may not know exactly what they do and how people become one. Every Foundation Trust will have a Council of Governors which is made up of elected members of the public, members of staff and appointed representatives.

Governors do not undertake operational management of the hospital but they challenge the Board of Directors and hold the Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) to account for the Trust's performance. It is also the Governors' responsibility to represent the Foundation Trust (FT) members' interests.

Governors must be FT members; they must be aged 16 or over and live in the relevant constituency.

In readiness for the final approval of the merger in March 2020, an election has now started where people from Bedford Borough (and its surrounding counties) can put themselves forward to stand as Governor and members vote the Governors in. There will be another election process in May 2020 to elect governors in the Luton, Central Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire constituencies.

If you are interested in becoming a Governor you can visit: <https://nom.ukevote.uk/ld>
Nomination forms need to be completed and submitted by **5pm on Friday 7 February**.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our stakeholders for their continued support and hope to see you at the next Public Briefing session.

Best Wishes,

Stephen Conroy
Chief Executive
Bedford Hospital

David Carter
Chief Executive
L&D University Hospital