

Summary: Merger public and patient engagement (November 2017)

Background

As part of the development of our proposal to merge Bedford and L&D Hospital, we are undertaking a programme of communications and engagement activity. While there is no requirement to consult as this does not propose significant service change, we recognise the importance of involving and engaging across our stakeholder groups. The public are an important audience and as such, we held an event in each of the key Bedfordshire locations – Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton - during November 2017 and attended some patient network groups. We are committed to continuing this engagement leading up to the merger transaction and beyond.

Our objectives

There were four key objectives for our public engagement events:

- provide an opportunity for local residents to hear about the merger proposal directly from the Chief Executives of both hospitals
- enable people to take part in a Question & Answer session
- encourage people to share their views or concerns in relation to the proposal
- promote Foundation Trust membership and encourage people to sign up (at the Bedford and Central Bedfordshire events particularly)

Information events

Three events were held at different times of the day to provide choice for people wanting to attend, with the same format and information at each. The Chief Executives hosted an event at each hospital and a further event was held in Central Bedfordshire.

The events were promoted through both Trusts and partners' (local councils, CCGs, community/ mental health providers) communication channels eg. website, social media. Local Healthwatch in each area also promoted these events through their networks and channels. The event at Bedford included British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters to support attendees with hearing difficulties.

In addition to the public information events, we also attended two local patient group meetings.

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| 23 November Public information event | L&D Social Club at L&D Hospital, Luton | 41 attendees |
| 24 November Public information event | Lecture Theatre at Bedford Hospital, Bedford | 45 attendees |
| 28 November Luton Patient Reference Group | Irish Forum, Luton | 12 attendees |
| 29 November Public information event | Rufus Centre, Flitwick (Central Bedfordshire) | 53 attendees |
| 6 December Patient Participation Network | Chiltern Vale, Dunstable | 10 attendees |
| | | 161 attendees |

These events also created an opportunity to engage with the public on the future name of the integrated Foundation Trust. At each event we asked people to share their views on the proposed name of Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. This feedback has been captured, along with responses to an online survey, and will be used to inform this decision – a summary of this is available on www.ldh.nhs.uk.

We also encouraged attendees to sign up to become a member of the new Foundation Trust, with L&D Governors attending to share insights on their role and the opportunity this provides to members of the public to have their say in their local hospital.

What we shared at the events

These events gave the local community a chance to hear information we had previously shared with staff and stakeholders around why the merger has been proposed, what are the benefits of merging and how are the plans progressing. The key messages were:

- The L&D and Bedford Hospital will be joining forces to become one Trust delivering the best possible patient care and services to the increasing Bedfordshire population
- Core clinical services will be retained on both sites with this merger, including Maternity, A&E and Paediatrics services.
- As a single organisation we are stronger. We can offer better recruitment opportunities and services across 7 days
- This presents a unique and exciting opportunity to improve patient care and the provision of clinical services for the local Bedfordshire population and beyond.
- Working together as one Trust will strengthen and enhance the healthcare workforce across both sites
- This Merger is in line with the developing BLMK STP and supports the STP's vision of improving health and social care for everyone.
- We won't change everything on Day 1 – this will be the starting point as we want any changes to services to be clinically led

What was fed back to us at the events

Across all three of the events, there were similar themes that were coming through in terms of the questions people had in relation to the merger proposal 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, were there plans to change services, the financial impact and whether future population growth had been considered.

As the merger proposal was developed based on feedback from previous engagement (through the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Sustainability and Transformation Plan [BLMK STP] and other local healthcare reviews), this engagement confirmed that our approach addresses the main concerns local people have i.e. accessing services locally, reducing the need to travel etc. These key themes and how these are addressed in the merger proposal are summarised below.

Key issues/ concerns

| Theme | Concern | How addressed |
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| Travel | Will I have to travel further to access hospital services? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recognise the importance to people of being able to access services locally. This has been considered in proposing the merger which will see core services including A&E, maternity and paediatrics remain at both sites, By keeping core services on both sites this means that the vast majority of services will still be accessible locally. Patients will only be asked to travel further if it's in their best interests to do so eg. Vascular, stroke. Evidence suggests that patients don't mind travelling for specialist services. We anticipate there will be minimal impact on the number patients having to travel further |
| Service changes | What will happen to specific services eg. radiology, pathology – will I still be able to access them locally? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No decisions have been made about changes to specific services. We are working closely with clinicians and looking for recommendations from the clinical teams. 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 that people currently have to travel for, back into Bedfordshire If there was a proposal to change services by moving or closing them after the merger, then this would need to go through the formal legal public consultation process led by commissioners. |
| Population growth | Has this been factored in? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the key reasons for the merger is to provide sustainable hospital services for the future to meet anticipated demand The merger proposal takes growth into account We continue to work with local councils, CCGs and other local healthcare partners to understand our current and future population to ensure our services will meet their needs. |
| 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 potential merger. There are significant developments underway in both hospitals such as improvements to IT systems, a new MRI scanner and the development of a new Theatre at Bedford Hospital. These and other projects will continue. As part of the agreement for the merger we are asking NHSI for a significant investment to enable both hospitals to do some much needed capital developments and refurbishments. |
| Financial challenges | How will the merger address current | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although finances are an important part of the merger plans, the focus of this proposal is to create a sustainable |

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| | challenges? | <p>Foundation Trust providing the best hospital services for patients and to create better opportunities for staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedford Hospital NHS Trust has a historic debt of approximately £40m accumulated over a five year period. We are in discussions with the Department of Health and NHS England in relation to this debt, integration costs and required capital costs. |
| Risks | Is the proposal being risk assessed? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trusts have set an ambitious timeline for approval which is driven by the desire to give staff and patients a clear view of the future of the services on both sites. • This risk is being managed through the programme governance and mitigated by effective joint leadership by the two CEOs, strong PMO and external support (PWC). • We have undertaken a due diligence exercise for both sites to make sure we fully understand any risks/ issues • We are carefully reviewing what changes must be in place by Day 1 and developing an integration plan for the subsequent two years. |

What specific questions did the public have?

| Theme | |
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| Travel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will patients have to travel to Bedford/ L&D or will consultants move? • Will the boundaries stay the same – might patient choice change? • What about transport/ logistics? • Will you be moving staff from one site to another? • It takes longer to get to Luton than Bedford – what is being done to consider public transport and parking? |
| Service changes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any changes planned to microbiology and pathology services? • What do you mean by critical mass - will it be one site rather than two? • Will Moorfields continue at Bedford Hospital? • Will nurses be part of the same organisation? • Can you confirm that the core services will be 24 hours and consultant led at both sites? • Will the boundaries stay the same – might patient choice change? • If CCCS end next year, what will happen to the Newborn Hearing Service? (part of ELFT contract) • Has there been a decision on the laboratory work? • Can you give a long term reassurance on the future of A&E? • Will acute surgery be relocated at both sites and what are the repercussions of this? • Will we be able to get blood tests at our GPs rather than having to go into hospital? |
| Population/ demographics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lot of new building going on – in Biggleswade alone over 5,000 more homes. How do you see the future? • What about the growing population? • Where does Central Beds fit into Luton & BHT catchment? • We have an ageing population – will a unified Trust have greater synergy with social care? |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about older people? |
| Development plans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the planned development at the L&D stopped as a result of the merger or the STP? • What is happening with the redevelopment plans at L&D – is there plans for more capital? • Where does the merger leave the L&D revamp? • What will happen to existing development plans at both hospitals – will they go ahead or are they stored? |
| Financial challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current accumulative deficit at Bedford? What will happen to this? • What will happen to this debt? • Will there be savings of management costs? • Is the main reason for the merger financial? • Will the merger strengthen capital investment opportunity? • What are the key financial benefits? • Is the £106m confirmed for L&D or are the hospitals competing for this money? |
| Risks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the merger plan being risk assessed? I'm concerned about the management effort distracting from the day job to push it through so quickly. Also the challenges of merging two different cultures • Given stats this doesn't look like a merger of equals – it looks like a takeover. What safeguards are in place so that BHT doesn't feel disenfranchised? • What happens if NHSI doesn't approve? |
| Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisational structure - Information Technology - Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) - Foundation Trust status - Full Business Case (FBC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will be CEO? • How much will we pay for consultants to progress this merger and will we be transparent? • How will the hospital communications systems work? • Will there be an impact on bed blocking? • What is a strategic alliance? • Do you have CCG backing? • What about Milton Keynes Hospital? • If you are not losing patients, why merge? • What steps are we going to take to make sure we have a first class ambulance service? • Why are the CCG not here? • If L&D is the bigger partner, shouldn't we see this as a threat? • Why no merger before – why now? • How will you maintain quality of care? • How did the Bedford meeting go? • What about MK/ STP? • Will the new Trust retain University status? • How confident are you of achieving approvals in the timescale you have set? • It's a good idea to have a reduction in management – will one hospital lose? • Who are the winners or losers? • This will mean significant structural changes as Bedford is being taken over. Why has there been no formal consultation • Why is the FBC not going to be publically available |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When/ how will FBC be available?• Will the legal status of the hospitals change?• How will the priority setting be processed?• What is the status of the STP/ MK?• Will the Board of the new Trust have proportional representation?• Given the uncertainty over Bedford Hospital, what is the logic to secure its future with an L&D takeover?• Are there plans to have the same IT/ patient record system? |
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Both Trusts have a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) which are available alongside other merger information on their websites – www.bedfordhospital.nhs.uk and www.ldh.nhs.uk

Next steps

This summary will be shared with the Joint Integration Board, who oversee the programme and the Trust Boards. Also, with the PMO and individual workstream owners/ project managers for review and consideration of this public feedback in their developing plans.

Those who attended the events and other public members/ stakeholders will be able to view the report on both Trust websites, along with the presentation that was used and the FAQs that were shared at the events. Feedback is encouraged via the merger@ldh.nhs.uk email address and further public engagement activity is being planned over the next few months.