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Stakeholder update on the proposal to merge Bedford Hospital and Luton and Dunstable University Hospital

Following the submission of the Full Business Case to NHS Improvement (NHSI) on 22 December 2017, we have continued to develop the plans for the merger of L&D and Bedford Hospital, working towards becoming a single NHS Foundation Trust.

Discussions have been ongoing with NHSI about the revenue and capital requirements that will underpin our ability to realise the benefits of the merger proposal. We had hoped by this point to have finalised our discussions with NHSI to enable us to merge the organisations on 1 April 2018. However we are currently not in a position to enable this to happen as the financial agreements that will ensure the new organisation has a strong foundation are not yet in place. We remain optimistic that any outstanding matters can be resolved but we now know that we won't have confirmation of the availability of capital until the next round of national funding is announced in Summer 2018.

We always recognised that it was an ambitious timeline to deliver the merger by 1 April and it has been a fantastic effort from both Trust teams to have reached this point. Both Boards will meet in June to review the progress of ongoing conversations with NHSI, and we will keep you updated throughout this process.

In the meantime, the plans for the merger will continue with priorities being the development of the IT and Pathology functions of the two Trusts. The joint Integration Board, consisting of executive representatives from both Trusts, will continue to lead the integration preparations with the support of both Trust Boards. The Trusts have appointed an integration director to lead the next phase of the integration work.

Planning for a single workforce

Real progress has been made around bringing together the Trusts into a single workforce. An Organisational Development Plan is providing the focus for all activities to support effective service and cultural integration. This includes agreement of shared values, staff and leadership development opportunities and support to the new Board, once established. Current activity includes a series of focus groups to agree the values and what they will mean in practice.

A staffside forum with membership from both hospitals has also been established and met for the first time earlier this month. This committee will provide the foundation for sharing information about the TUPE process and what it means for staff at both hospitals, once a new date for the transition has been agreed.

Have your say in your local hospital

In preparation for the merger, volunteers and representatives from both Trusts have been out and about in the community, encouraging Bedford residents to become a member of the new Foundation Trust. FT Members have a say in how the hospitals are run, how healthcare is provided to patients and can voice their concerns or make suggestions about future plans.

So far over 1200 people have signed up but more are needed to ensure that the membership reflects the population in which the two hospitals serve. Initially people will be signed up to the L&D membership, however at the point of merger, membership will be automatically transferred across to the new integrated Trust.

We want to use this additional time to make sure we have enough members to enable Governor elections to take place as soon as the Trusts merge - to sign up, please email merger@ldh.nhs.uk or visit www.bedfordhospital.nhs.uk and click on the 'Proposed Merger and FT Membership' box on the home page.

For those who have already signed up, we will be sending a letter out soon and will continue to update you as plans progress.

Information about the proposed merger can be found on both hospital websites www.ldh.nhs.uk and www.bedfordhospital.nhs.uk or email merger@ldh.nhs.uk

Best wishes,

Stephen Conroy
Chief Executive, Bedford Hospital

David Carter
Chief Executive, L&D University Hospital

