

June 2018 – Edition 7

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

Our joint Integration Board, consisting of executive representatives from both Trusts, continues to meet to discuss plans to merge Bedford Hospital and Luton and Dunstable University Hospital. This month our Trust Boards also met and had an opportunity to consider the forward timeline and priorities for the coming months.

The Board welcomed the update on positive progress that has been made over recent months. Work has been ongoing to update and finalise capital bids for estates redevelopment - a 'hot block' at the L&D and upgraded A&E at Bedford - as well as key areas such as Pathology and IM&T services. These bids are being channelled through the BLMK STP and will be submitted to NHSI (along with other transformation bids across the country) to be considered over the summer.

Information sharing – creating a common platform

The ability of the Trusts to work more effectively together is reliant on having joined up IT systems. Bedford Hospital was awarded 'Fast Follower' status this year, partnering with the L&D who are part of the NHS England Global Digital Exemplar (GDE) programme. This recognises Trusts who are digitally advanced and provides national funding to support digital improvement and transformation.



Having now received £15m in funding (£10m for L&D; £5m for Bedford) the Trusts are starting to implement some improvement initiatives. This will include the introduction of a new IT system for emergency care at Bedford Hospital which will mirror that in place at the L&D (Symphony). The system is expected to be up and running in A&E and the new Urgent Treatment Centre at Bedford Hospital by November and will provide clinicians with a complete and more informed picture of their patient to help staff provide more timely and higher quality care. It will also support improved overall performance and with getting discharge letters out. Other planned improvements include the introduction of electronic notes across Bedford Hospital - which is largely still paper-based - and remote patient consultations.

To support this partnership working, a joint IM&T team is being established at Cranfield. The team will have shared access and work across both sites, looking at how they can use technology to share best practice, inform clinical working and reduce duplication or convergence. The team will also support work in progress across BLMK STP to create a shared health and care record.

Towards a regional pathology network

Planning for the creation of an integrated pathology service for Bedford and L&D Hospital has commenced. This will take a phased approach and enable the Trusts to provide better access to high quality diagnostic clinical equipment and information for hospital consultants and local GPs, improving outcomes and patient experience. More details will follow in the next newsletter.

Clinical engagement

The Trust's clinical leaders continue to explore ways of working more collaboratively and have identified specialty areas to adopt a trial approach to integrated working. They will initially focus on Trauma and Orthopaedics (T&O) with other services to follow.

This initiative will look at the current model of service provision for each specialty at each Trust and will involve clinicians from both sites working together to design an integrated model.



Leadership

Following her substantive appointment to the Board as L&D Chief Nurse, Liz Lees has now taken up a joint role working across Bedford Hospital and the L&D whilst the Trusts continue to make preparations for the merger. Liz has vast experience in both operational and clinical roles and was involved in the reconfiguration of the Lister and the QEII emergency pathways.

Liz has been the Interim Director of Nursing at Bedford Hospital since April 2018 and will provide strong leadership across both sites in this role.

Next steps

An announcement on the next round of national funding is now expected in the Autumn Budget. Subject to funding being available to support the merger proposal, the Trusts will submit a revised Full Business Case later this year and are confident in their plans to merge and create a single NHS Foundation Trust for Bedfordshire no later than 1 April 2019.

The partnership approach that has been established between Bedford and L&D Hospital continues and some real progress has been made regarding future ways of working together to provide the best possible services for the people of Bedfordshire and surrounding areas.

Once the capital bids have been approved, a joint Executive team will be set up to continue to oversee and guide merger preparations. We will keep you updated as work progresses and appreciate your ongoing support. If you have any questions you can email merger@ldh.nhs.uk

Best wishes,

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