



Northern Devon Healthcare

NHS Trust

June 2019

BRIEFING FOR STAKEHOLDERS

Hospital services in northern Devon

In June 2018, a collaborative agreement was established between Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust and the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust to provide support to NDHT in the short to medium term in addressing some of the challenges we face in providing acute services.

This agreement builds on the long-standing clinical networking arrangements already in place between the two trusts and initially runs until summer 2020. By then we need to have developed our plans for hospital services in northern Devon to ensure we have sustainable arrangements for the future.

In order to do this, we are undertaking a review of a selection of the key hospital services needed by the population of northern Devon, and for each service asking ourselves two questions:

- What are the clinical arrangements which best meet the healthcare needs of the population of northern Devon?
- What is the organisational form which best delivers these arrangements?

Following this process allows us to start in the right place by firstly understanding any challenges facing our services and how we best meet people's needs, and then determining the organisational form that best delivers that.

Suzanne Tracey, chief executive of NDHT and the RD&E, said: "The acute services review work showed clearly that we need a hospital in North Devon with a 24/7 A&E and other supporting services.

"We now need to look closely at how we deliver on that commitment and ensure that we achieve safe, high quality and sustainable clinical services for the population of northern Devon.

"In the time I've been in post, I've heard from many of you about the transport and access difficulties people face locally, and how important our services are to people.

“We are really committed to providing as much as we can locally and I want to recognise and build on how innovative our staff have been in coming up with solutions and different ways of working to support this.

“However we need to be realistic about what we can do. We have been experiencing significant workforce challenges in some of our services as a result of national shortages for some time and these are unlikely to be resolved in the near future.

“We will be looking closely at these vulnerable services and those which are crucial to supporting A&E to help us develop future plans, which will set out how we will deliver sustainable services to the population of northern Devon for years to come.”

The findings of this work will be fed into Devon's Long Term Plan, as well as the work that has commenced on a Peninsula Clinical Services Strategy.

What are the challenges facing our services?

There are three challenges which have affected our clinical and financial sustainability for many years.

- **Remoteness:** North Devon District Hospital is the most remote acute hospital in mainland England.
- **Workforce:** Remote hospitals tend to experience heightened workforce challenges and being a smaller hospital means that vacancies can have a greater impact on teams. Staff at NDHT and our partners have been fantastic at coming up with different ways of working to help reduce the effects of workforce shortages, for example through developing new roles and nursing/therapy-led models, as well as our own staff bank for temporary shifts. However this continues to be the most significant challenge we face. The infographic included with this briefing illustrates how the workforce challenges impact upon us locally.
- **Finance:** Both remoteness and workforce pressures mean some of our services can cost more to run than other NHS hospitals and this has led to increased pressure on the Trust's financial position. The Trust ended the 2018/19 financial year with a £17m deficit, with a plan beginning in 2019/20 to move towards financial balance.

As we carry out this work, we want to understand how these challenges impact our services more fully, so we can determine how we can best provide sustainable services for the future.

Which services are we looking at?

Our agreed starting point is that we need a hospital in North Devon with a 24/7 A&E, so we are interested in ensuring our A&E is surrounded by strong services which meet the needs of the local population.

We are focusing on 11 key services, shown in the table below.

Essential to support A&E	Facing a challenge
A&E	Care of the elderly
Intensive Care (ICU)	Stroke
Acute Surgery	Oncology
Acute Medicine	Maternity (Obs and Gynae)
Paediatrics (assessments)	Radiology
	Trauma and Orthopaedics
	Acute Medicine
	Paediatrics (wider service)

Since March, we have been meeting with the clinical teams leading these services to understand their vision and plans for the future, and what support they may need to achieve them.

We see this as a really positive and important piece of work that will form the cornerstone of our future plans for all local healthcare services. This will also help us to make a decision about what form the organisation will take in the future.

How are we involving patients and the community?

We are working with staff, patients and the community to ensure as many views as possible are captured as we develop our plans.

We are currently talking to patients with lived experience of the services we are focusing on to understand what is important to people when using these services. If you have experience as a patient or carer/family member of any of the 11 services, we would love to hear from you. If you would like to participate, please contact ndht.communications@nhs.net.

We are also meeting with community groups and representatives to talk about this process and we will be providing regular updates.

If you'd like to sign up for updates, please contact ndht.communications@nhs.net and let us know you'd like to join the mailing list for Trust news. Please note that if you received this briefing directly via email, you are already on our mailing list.

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