

Update for Alliance partners
31 July 2017

Building a new alliance – an update on NHS community services

Much work is taking place across health and social care to make services simpler for people and their loved ones in the future. A major part of this is the formation of two new alliances, who will work across organisational boundaries so that patients and carers can navigate services better.

The alliances are made up of Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust (in the east) and West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (in the west), with Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT), Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk GP Federation in both.

From 1 October, NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk and NHS West Suffolk clinical commissioning groups will award a new contract for NHS community health services to these alliances. The contract will run for a minimum of seven years with an option to extend to 10, and will cover the whole of Suffolk, with the exception of the Waveney area.

The contract award is the first important step our health and social care system will take towards fully integrating care and tackling rising demands on doctors, nurses and health professionals. The alliances will aim to deliver health and care which uses resources more flexibly and effectively while carrying out more preventative work to help people to stay well and more independent for longer.

Where we are now

Community services have been provided under the name “Suffolk Community Healthcare” by a partnership of Ipswich and West Suffolk Hospitals and Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust (NCH&C) since October 2015. A lot of work has been taking place to make sure they transfer seamlessly from these providers to the alliances on 1 October, and that patients will not notice any difference in the care they receive.

Decisions have now been taken around which services will be aligned to which of the alliance partners to ensure that they are safe, reliable and bring the greatest opportunities for integration. Managers within community services have shared this information with their teams, and informal drop-in sessions have also been held to give staff the chance to ask questions. Additional sessions will be arranged later in the summer.

In cases where services are being realigned, staff may need to transfer to a different employer under TUPE, which offers legal protection for their terms and conditions. Any transfers which do take place will follow the proper legal process, which includes a period of formal consultation.

What happens next

Work will continue to ensure services can transfer smoothly on 1 October. The exception to this is specialist children’s community services, which will transition to a slightly different timescale to fit in with and allow for the changes Suffolk County Council is planning, as well as national reforms.

Once the alliances have started running the community services contract, further work will take place to join up health and social care so that it can better respond to the needs of the community. The aim will be to provide more coordinated, holistic and preventative care, which empowers people to play a central role in managing their own health and wellbeing.

Stakeholders will be invited to take part in these discussions, while patients and the public will be asked for their views if and when there are any fundamental changes to services.

The alliances will continue to keep stakeholders informed of progress as we move towards 1 October and beyond.

Sent on behalf of the alliances, which are made up of Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust, West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT), Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk GP Federation.