

NEWS RELEASE

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Proposed configuration of Lancashire's mental health inpatient services unveiled

The proposed future configuration of Lancashire's mental health inpatient services has been unveiled by the county's mental health trust and primary care trusts.

The proposals – the result of months of detailed work with clinicians and service users – have been agreed by the five Lancashire primary care trusts in the last three weeks.

The proposals include having four inpatient units across Lancashire in the future. These include:

- A new build at Whyndyke Farm, Blackpool;
- The refurbishment and remodelling of the current unit at Royal Blackburn Hospital;
- The continued redevelopment of Pathfinders Drive in Lancaster; and
- A site in central Lancashire (the location is to be determined by further public engagement).

The proposals follow a very detailed review undertaken by an expert 'technical appraisal group' which included GPs and mental health service users and carers. At the same time, the PCTs sought the opinions of the public and service users. A key theme to emerge included the need to develop individualised support for both service users and carers.

A full report will be presented to the health overview and scrutiny committees who will advise what further engagement or consultation with the public and service users needs to take place. A detailed transition plan will also be developed to determine how these plans can be implemented over the next five years.

Debbie Nixon, strategic director of mental health services across Lancashire, said: "I would like to say a huge thank you to the hundreds of service users and carers who have given us their views about mental health services over the past few months. You very clearly told us that having local services was incredibly important, and this has been taken into consideration in the development of these proposals."

Heather Tierney-Moore, chief executive of Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust, said: "The proposals we have developed are based on extensive clinical evidence, as well as feedback from service users. They outline how we plan to develop a network of community and hospital-based mental health provision across Lancashire. Inpatient beds are very specialist and used by proportionately very few people, and so, like other specialist health services, it is not possible to provide them 'locally' to everyone. The current proposals make the inpatient capacity most accessible to the two populations with the highest need: Blackpool and Blackburn. These locations have good access from other parts of Lancashire, including Burnley and Preston. This is about serving the needs of the county-wide population as effectively as possible within the resources that we have.

“The proposals remain true to the 2006 consultation which outlined the need to have a much smaller number of inpatient sites across the county, but take on board service users’ requests to keep services local.”

The proposals to reorganise the county’s mental health inpatient services were first outlined in an extensive public consultation in 2006. The proposed changes included strengthening community-based treatment and support and reducing the number of inpatient facilities to establish a smaller number of purpose-built sites. This was based on evidence that too many people in Lancashire were going into hospital and staying there because there were not enough suitable alternatives in their communities. The care most people with mental health problems need can be provided very effectively in communities rather than hospital. Not only do many patients prefer to receive support in a community setting, where appropriate, but they have better mental health outcomes when they are supported by services delivered outside of hospital. This is because when people are able to stay in their home environment they maintain contact with their family and friends, have less risk of losing their jobs, and can continue living their normal lives.

Whenever large changes to health services are proposed the National Clinical Advisory Team (NCAT) looks in detail at the clinical evidence and makes sure the change is necessary and will bring real improvements to patient care. NCAT is independent and its report, published in December 2010, said that the proposals were “in line with good clinical practice”.

Since the 2006 consultation took place, there has been significant investment in community mental health services across the county. Because of this, less people now need to go to hospital for treatment.

The NCAT review recommended that less mental health inpatient beds were required across Lancashire than the 2006 consultation suggested. Extensive evaluation work by the technical appraisal group supports this conclusion.

Dr Malcolm Ridgeway, NHS Blackburn with Darwen Care Trust Plus Medical Director, said: “There has been a significant investment in community mental health services across Lancashire in recent years. As a result of this, more and more people for whom going to hospital was once the only option are able to be treated effectively in a community setting. This is great news for patients, and, as a consequence demand for inpatient care has fallen. Our detailed analysis indicates that we need less inpatient beds in Lancashire than originally thought. We will be seeking the advice Lancashire’s overview and scrutiny committees about the next steps in terms of further public engagement or consultation.”

More information, including copies of the NCAT report, is available on the Lancashire Mental Health and Social Care Partnership website: www.lancashirementalhealth.co.uk/oct2010.htm.

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Notes to editors

1. The five PCTs in Lancashire are: Blackburn with Darwen NHS Care Plus Trust, NHS Blackpool, NHS Central Lancashire, NHS East Lancashire and NHS North Lancashire.
2. The main provider of inpatient mental health services in Lancashire is Lancashire Care Foundation NHS Trust.
3. The Lancashire PCTs now spend over £23million a year on specialist community mental health services across the county, enabling more people to be treated at home, promoting recovery and independence.
4. Current inpatient facilities affected by the inpatient reconfiguration are located at 10 sites across the county of Lancashire:
 - Ribbleson Hospital, Preston; Chorley Hospital, Chorley; Ormskirk District General Hospital, Ormskirk; Royal Blackburn Hospital, Blackburn; Burnley General Hospital, Burnley; Blackpool Victoria Hospital, Blackpool; Lytham Hospital, Lytham; Ridge Lea

Hospital, Lancaster; Oaklands Unit, Pathfinders Drive, Lancaster; and Altham Meadows, Morecambe.

5. Mental health services will be managed as a network – an interconnected system of care – which includes specialist community-based services close to people's homes, as well as inpatient services for the very few people who need them. This approach is about delivering the best balance of high quality care, safety and reasonable access to people living across the county within the resources available.
6. Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust's proposals consider bed numbers at the four sites, with the greatest capacity at Blackpool and Blackburn. While the PCT boards have approved the four-unit configuration, the final bed numbers will be agreed as specific site implementation plans are developed with GP consortia and other key stakeholders. The planned phasing of sites over the next five years gives full opportunity to review and ensure that the required capacity is developed across all proposed sites to ensure they meet the needs of service users and offer best value.
7. Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust also provides inpatient services for younger people and secure services at sites across Lancashire. These are not included within the reconfiguration process.