Letter from Medical/Clinical Directors: Fit for the Future

Dear all

Fit for the Future – developing urgent and specialist hospital care in Gloucestershire

The Fit for the Future engagement is now well underway; feedback is coming in from staff, community partners and the public with close to 1,000 visitors to engagement events over the past few weeks.

We are grateful to everyone who has got involved so far and shared with us what matters to them about local health and care services.

We felt this was a good time to reflect and reiterate some key messages about the Fit for the Future engagement.

The engagement period

We want local residents to have access to leading edge care and treatment and for our great staff to have the best possible working environments.

The expectations of healthcare, the demands on health services, and the incredible progress made through science, technology and developing staff skills and expertise has dramatically changed the environment that we are operating in. As a result, we need to plan now for the future of local services.

It’s not about cutting costs, it’s about ensuring people get the very best healthcare and services that are comparable to the best in the country. We are aiming high and want to be leading the way, not falling behind others and that’s the motivation behind Fit for the Future.

We have set out some ideas for how services could develop in the engagement booklet to inform discussions, but there are no detailed options being presented at this stage. We have developed a series of fact sheets, patient stories and frequently asked questions for people who want to find out more.

This engagement is an open dialogue. It’s an opportunity for everyone to share their ideas and get involved in developing potential solutions.

There are innovative ways in which staff, community partners and the public can share their own ideas and also have their say on the criteria that will be used to assess potential solutions. See [www.onegloucestershire.net/yoursay/fit-for-the-future](http://www.onegloucestershire.net/yoursay/fit-for-the-future) for details.

Community urgent care

Together with local people, we need to look at how same day urgent illness and injury services are provided across our communities, in pharmacies, GP surgeries and hospitals, based on local circumstances, needs and the desire to provide outstanding care.

For services like x-ray, we need the public’s help in finding the best solutions so people can always rely on timely access to specialist staff and the best care, every time.

We have arranged a number of locality workshop dates to discuss community urgent care and you can express an interest in attending a session near you by emailing: [GLCCG.participation@nhs.net](mailto:GLCCG.participation@nhs.net) Information and dates can be found on the above website.

A new hospital for the Forest of Dean: Following extensive engagement over the last few years, there is a lot of interest from local residents and staff in the development of the new hospital. We are currently thinking about the services the new hospital would provide and you can find out more and have your say at [www.fodhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.fodhealth.nhs.uk/)

Specialist hospital services and centres of excellence – Cheltenham General Hospital and Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

To get the best for our patients, one idea is to consider a greater separation between emergency care and planned care and this could include creating two centres of excellence – one on each site.

Across the UK and the world, doctors recognise that this way of organising services, by bringing scarce specialist staff and equipment together, is one way of improving care and health outcomes for everyone.

For planned care, it can reduce the number of booked operations that get cancelled, reduce waiting times and reduce the risk of hospital acquired infections.

For emergency care (critical life and limb threatening conditions), it can improve people’s chances of survival and recovery, reduce the time people spend in hospital and sometimes even avoid a hospital stay altogether.

If the idea of creating centres of excellence was taken forward, it could take up to ten years to achieve and would be dependent on a number of ‘building blocks’ such as having the right facilities, buildings, equipment, technology, staff and money in place.

During this engagement we are focussing in particular on general surgery (planned and emergency), image guided interventional surgery and acute and emergency medicine.

A key topic for discussion so far has been the future for A&E services in the county.

We have been very clear that no plans have been drawn up to close A&E in Cheltenham and this engagement is an opportunity for people to have their say on how best to deliver outstanding specialist hospital care in the future, including the nature of local A&E services.

There has been some speculation that potential future changes could put additional strain on services at the Gloucestershire Royal Hospital site. Wherever services are provided, we are very mindful that demand for services must be matched with appropriate capacity, including staffing and facilities such as beds and theatres.

We have stated that we see both the Cheltenham General and Gloucestershire Royal hospital sites continuing to provide a range of same day, walk in, urgent care services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for local patients. Whatever form that ultimately takes, the majority of patients who need urgent hospital care, would continue to access services as they do now.

Get involved and have your say

We would like to encourage as many people as possible to share their own ideas and suggestions over the autumn. We recognise that there is a lot to discuss whether that’s that the quality of care people receive,

patient experience, health outcomes, safety, population changes or access to services, including travel and transport matters.

People can find out how to get involved by visiting [www.onegloucestershire.net/yoursay/fit-for-the-future](http://www.onegloucestershire.net/yoursay/fit-for-the-future) or by picking up a booklet from a range of public places across the county, including pharmacies, GP surgeries, hospitals and libraries.

We continue to emphasise that our staff and the public would be consulted on any significant changes proposed that followed on from the engagement period.

By harnessing the knowledge, expertise, innovation, passion and creativity that exists in Gloucestershire, together we can ensure that local healthcare is truly fit for the future.

We look forward to hearing your views.

