

CCGs in mid and south Essex agree proposals for hospital changes

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The five clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) in mid and south Essex have given the go ahead for plans to secure the future of health and care services.

The plans are a result of two years of detailed work undertaken by clinical teams across health and care organisations to improve the services provided to the 1.2 million people living in mid and south Essex, and follows the outcome of a 16 week public consultation.

The Joint Committee of the CCGs gave approval to implement proposals, which include:

- Making improvements in A&E at all three hospitals in Southend, Basildon and Chelmsford, with the development of new assessment and treatment centres alongside each A&E. All three A&Es will be led by a consultant, open 24 hours a day and will receive “blue light” ambulances, as well as “walk-in” patients.
- Developing a new specialist stroke unit at Basildon Hospital, which will provide the highest dependency and intensive care for people in the first 72 hours following a stroke. The specialist unit will give rapid access to tests and specialist therapies, 24 hours a day, which will improve the chances of a good recovery. This will be in addition to the local stroke care units at all three hospitals, which will continue to provide rehabilitation and other stroke-related care, as they do now. Patients suspected of having a stroke will go by ambulance initially to the nearest A&E for stabilisation and then transfer to the specialist stroke unit for up to three days, if that is what is needed. After that, patients would return home if they have made a good recovery, or go back to a facility closer to home for further rehabilitation.
- Bringing together in one place some specialist inpatient care where there is existing expertise and to allow for extended hours, with seven days a week consultant and specialist cover for these services.
- Separating some planned operations from emergency cases. Some complex orthopaedic operations, such as hip and knee replacements, that need a few days hospital stay will be provided at Southend Hospital for people in south Essex and Braintree Community Hospital for people in mid Essex. This will avoid cancelled operations and reduce infection risks by separating this type of care from emergency care.
- Moving some services closer to where people live. Services currently provided at Orsett Hospital, including tests and scans, will be provided in four new “integrated medical centres” in Thurrock and new facilities in Basildon and Brentwood. This will eventually lead to the closure of Orsett Hospital, but only when new services

are up and running. The Joint Committee agreed that a patient representative group should be involved in further more detailed planning.

These changes are alongside the plans launched last month to build up GP and community services with a £30 million increase in annual funding to extend the range of professionals and services available via GP practices. This will create more appointments and increase care closer to where people live.

The committee was asked to approve 19 recommendations, set out in a decision making business case.

In particular this included specific recommendations to address the main concerns raised during the public consultation, regarding the safe transfer of patients and support for carers and relatives to visit loved ones who may be at a different hospital.

The full decision-making business case can be found at <http://www.nhsmidandsouthessex.co.uk/decision-making-business-case/>

Professor Mike Bewick, independent chair of the CCG Joint Committee said:

“These decisions are an important next stage in the work we have been doing together to develop and build a health and care system fit for the future for the people of mid and south Essex.

“We have listened to the feedback we received during the public consultation and the very understandable concerns about whether the changes will improve care for patients.

“As we now start planning how to introduce these changes in a safe way, we have committed to continue to involve and update our community as we progress.”

Clare Panniker, chief executive of the three hospitals said:

“Basildon, Southend and Broomfield hospitals will all continue to provide the services our patients use the most. These include outpatient appointments, children’s services and day-case surgery.

“I also want to reassure our community, patients and staff that no services will change overnight. Robust plans, including those for transport, will need to be in place before any changes occur.

“We are pleased the joint committee has agreed these proposals to run our hospitals in a better way by working together and using our people and resources as effectively as possible for the greatest benefit to patients. “This process has been about ensuring safe and sustainable services for our community, and that continues to be our priority in the coming weeks and months as we work together to deliver the best possible care in all three of our hospitals.”

Caroline Russell, accountable officer for Mid Essex CCG and programme leader for local health and care said:

“The changes agreed today are substantially different from initial proposals two years ago, having taken on board the opinions and views of clinicians and local people throughout the planning process.

“The way that people will get access to emergency specialist care via their local A&E has benefited from public discussions; and plans for transport to help families to visit their relative in hospital are now much more detailed.

“We are all extremely grateful to the thousands of people who took part in the consultation and the relationships that have built up will continue to get these changes right for our local residents.”

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