

Position Statement on the proposed merger between Hinchingsbrooke NHS Trust and Peterborough and Stamford NHS Foundation Trust

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Healthwatch Cambridgeshire is the local statutory patient and public involvement organisation. We undertake a range of engagement activities with local communities and record people's experiences of using health and care services. On the basis of this intelligence, we can use statutory powers to challenge health and care decision makers if care isn't working in the way it should.
- 1.2 We are part of a national network through Healthwatch England and have direct local and national links with regulatory bodies such as the Care Quality Commission and NHS Improvement.

2. Hinchingsbrooke NHS Trust

- 2.1 We are delighted to have an excellent relationship with the staff and Board of Hinchingsbrooke NHS Trust. We have supported their improvements in patient experience following the poor CQC Inspection outcome and have been pleased to see a more rigorous and inclusive approach to patient experience develop. The improvements in care seen at the Trust in the past 18 months is evident, the Trust should be applauded for moving from 'Inadequate' to 'Good' in their latest CQC report.
- 2.2 We collect a significant amount of patient feedback about the hospital and its services. For many years there has been uncertainty about the hospital's future and there is huge community interest in keeping the hospital open. Local people feel that their hospital has been used as a political football, the low level of trust in decision-makers is evident.
- 2.3 The majority of feedback we receive about the hospital is positive. However, we are aware that people are reticent to give negative feedback for fear of losing the hospital.

2.4 When the possibility of the merger was announced there was a high level of local panic as people misinterpreted this as closure. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire has given presentations and spoken to many groups, including the 'Hands Off Hinchingsbrooke' campaign, explaining this is not the case and that the merger is one way of keeping a viable safe local hospital. We understand the recruitment issues the Trust faces, underlined by the poor rating of the Emergency Department in the last CQC report. We further understand that sustainability of such a small hospital in its current organisational form is not realistic.

3. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire's position

3.1 It is important that local people feel they are listened to and have an opportunity to shape change. We have attended all of the local public meetings to listen to what people are saying.

3.2 We have asked that the Full Business Case include a comprehensive plan for meaningful patient and public involvement, which includes:

- Proposals to make sure local people are members of the merged Trust;
- A commitment to principles and activities that promote talking and listening to local people about their experiences of care;
- Routine ways to make sure these are used to inform decision making and develop services; and
- Regular feedback to the Trust Board broken down by hospital site, as well as overall, so we know how care is working at Hinchingsbrooke.

3.3 HWC will be examining the Full Business Case to assess how these points are addressed and will present that assessment to Hinchingsbrooke NHS Trust.

3.4 HWC will fully support the consultation should the decision be taken to go ahead with the merger.

3.5 Further information can be found at:

<http://www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk/news/future-care-hinchingsbrooke-hospital>