



Acute Hospital Services Reform Information for Trust Staff, February 2009

The Trust are currently consulting on proposals to reform acute hospital services. Under Developing Better Services (DBS), it has already been set out that the Trust will focus acute hospital services on two sites - Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital. This will mean certain changes for both Whiteabbey Hospital and the Mid Ulster Hospital in Magherafelt. The Trust is committed to retaining hospital services locally where it is safe to do so, and centralising only where necessary. A wide range of services will continue to be provided from Whiteabbey and Mid Ulster Hospitals. This leaflet sets out the key aspects of this proposal.

What is proposed to change?

The Trust is proposing to reconfigure acute hospital services, concentrating acute hospital emergency medicine and in-patient surgery services at Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital.

These changes are necessary in order to provide safe, high quality services to acutely ill patients. Under the new arrangements acutely ill patients will be admitted to a hospital with the appropriately skilled staff and support services (such as intensive care and advanced diagnostic services), providing patients with the most appropriate treatment and care to meet their needs.

What services will be provided at Whiteabbey and Mid Ulster Hospitals?

Under the proposal, both Whiteabbey and Mid Ulster Hospitals would provide the following services:

- **Minor Injury Units** – these high-quality units can effectively see, treat and discharge up to 70% of those patients currently attending A&E at both hospitals
- **Day Surgery** – for patients who can be discharged on the same day that their surgical procedure is completed
- **Out-patients** – all current Consultant outpatient clinics will continue to be held at Whiteabbey and Mid Ulster Hospitals
- **Day Procedures** – all day procedures will be retained, eg lower and upper endoscopy procedures
- **Diagnostic tests**, including CT scanning and x-ray – (a new mobile CT scanner is planned to be located at the Whiteabbey Hospital site – CT scanning is already at Mid Ulster Hospital)
- **In-patient rehabilitation beds** – 60 beds at Whiteabbey Hospital; 29 beds at Mid Ulster Hospital are proposed, so people can have rehabilitation locally after their acute period in hospital

What is the proposed timescales for change?

The need to make these changes in the interest of safe and sustainable services means that the proposals could be phased from an early date in the current year, commencing first with the changes taking effect at Whiteabbey Hospital.

However, there is a need to increase capacity at Antrim Area Hospital before these changes can be implemented. A temporary ward is planned at Antrim to facilitate the changes from Whiteabbey

(expected about Jan 2010) and a new permanent ward block (likely to take 2 to 3 years to complete) will create the capacity at Antrim Area Hospital to enable changes at Mid Ulster Hospital.

How might this reform affect staff at Whiteabbey and Mid Ulster?

The Trust is not planning for any compulsory redundancies.

A balance of workforce controls, suitable alternative employment, early retirements and voluntary redundancies will be implemented in every effort to avoid the need for any compulsory redundancies. Every possible effort will be made to keep valuable skills and experience within the Trust, minimise costs and provide value for money services.

Where relocation or redeployment is required then every effort will be made to ensure staff remain as close as is reasonably possible to their current work base, taking account of work/life balance issues. If appropriate, excess travel expenses will be paid.

Appropriate training and re-training opportunities will be provided to assist staff who move to new roles and assume new responsibilities.

How will we keep staff informed?

Staff engagement is crucial in taking forward this reform within acute services. There are a range of ways in which the Trust intends to keep staff informed, including:

- **Support from Line Managers, Human Resources staff and Union representatives to help support staff.**
- **The Trust will develop a communications strategy to ensure that all staff are kept fully informed of planned actions/developments.**
- **The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) changes will be taken forward through partnership approaches and in consultation and negotiation with Trade Unions.**
- **A project management approach will be utilized and Staff Side representatives will be involved in all CSR Project Groups and Project Board.**
- **Regular updates on the CSR will be provided in the Northern News and in the Chief Executive's regular letter to each member of staff.**
- **Staff briefing sessions will be scheduled at both hospitals (various times will be arranged to accommodate staff on various shifts).**

Who can you contact about any concerns?

Acute Hospital staff may still have concerns about the changes that are proposed, particularly how these changes will affect Whiteabbey and Mid Ulster Hospitals. Please feel free to:

- Raise any queries you have with your Line Manager in the first instance
- Talk to your staff side representative
- Use the Trust U-Talk facility, u.talk@northerntrust.hscni.net Tel: 0289442 4670