News Release

Site rationalisation proposals

Staff across the Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trusts were yesterday (9th August) briefed on the provisional findings of its review of services and sites.

The Trust is facing the challenge of making savings of £20m this year whilst continuing to maintain services and reduce waiting times and delivering a more modern, efficient and sustainable NHS, providing the best possible care for the best possible value. Its services are provided across three sites – Royal Cornwall, St Michael’s and West Cornwall hospitals.

Following initial appraisal work in partnership with clinicians, the Trust is exploring further two options for change. The first option is a significant reconfiguration of services across all three sites. This would increase the amount of planned surgery at St Michael’s Hospital - a site highly regarded by patients across Cornwall. It would then require a change in the mix of services at West Cornwall Hospital to increase the number of patients treated there but reducing the level of emergency care. The combined results of these changes would focus emergency and complex care services at the Royal Cornwall Hospital but reduce the total number of patients treated on that site, therefore the number of wards and facilities. These proposals were developed with, and are strongly supported by, clinical staff.

The second remains the withdrawal of services from West Cornwall or St Michael’s hospitals and consolidation on the remaining site and at the Royal Cornwall Hospital.

Speaking of the first proposal Rob Pitcher, Medical Director said, "This is a great opportunity for Cornwall to achieve 3 objectives aimed at improving the quality and delivery of clinical services. These are to concentrate complex and high risk services on one site, to provide as many services as can safely be delivered to West Cornwall residents close to their community and to develop a centre for specialist elective work for Cornwall making best use of the St Michael’s site."

/cont…
Paula Friend, Acting Chief Executive said, "I am pleased that the initial process involving staff and others in exploring options has resulted in a proposal which is strongly supported by clinicians. However, we cannot avoid the financial challenges faced by the Trust and must ensure that the proposal delivers the financial savings required as well as service improvements. Work over the next five weeks will clarify whether or not this is the case. This will involve staff, partner organisations, public and patient involvement groups and other interested parties. Following discussions of the results at the Board, proposals will be taken to the OSC for further discussion and consideration on potential progression to formal public consultation on 27th September."

The proposals do not diminish the need to make immediate efficiency savings and it will be necessary to close one theatre by the end of August and one ward by mid September, as agreed last week with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The site of closure may not be permanent and may result in the re-opening of the facilities and closure of other equivalent areas on a different site at the end of the consultation process. Importantly, the proposals do not lose sight of the Cornwall NHS-wide strategy to move more care closer to patients homes, or plans for a new health campus for the west of Cornwall, and will be developed to work together with those longer-term aims.

[ends]

09 August 2006

A Peninsula Medical School Teaching Hospitals Trust

www.cornwall.nhs.uk/rcht

For further information please contact the Press & Public Relations Office, Royal Cornwall Hospital, Truro, TR1 3LJ. 📞 01872 252934 during office hours or 01872 250000 for urgent enquiries at other times.