

Health Care in Trowbridge – the future?

So, now the hospital has closed the beds and the vandalism has started on the old hospital site it seems an appropriate time to review what is happening now and what might or should happen in the next few years that will change the way healthcare is delivered in Trowbridge.

Where are we now?

Currently the town has four GP practices, a community clinic (The Halve), a hospital site running a Minor Injury Unit (MIU), Maternity Unit including some beds for post delivery stays, an outpatient department, Physiotherapy and an X-ray / Ultrasound unit. The MIU is the base for the out-of-hours doctor service and is open 24hrs per day, 7 days per week. Care at home is delivered by the new Neighbourhood teams comprised of District Nurses, Health care assistants and some therapists.

What is the plan?

Bradford Road Surgery is run from a converted house that is no longer fit for purpose and the GP practices have agreed for the surgery to re-locate. They have decided to join with Adcroft to form a new practice and develop an extension to the current Adcroft building to achieve this. This will leave the town with 3 GP surgeries, each running independently. The extension development will happen on the cricket field site owned by Wiltshire PCT.

The other services currently operating will be re-located to a new building called the Primary Care Centre (PCC). This will be built on the cricket field site in a separate development to the Adcroft building. The Halve Clinic and the existing hospital site will be sold to developers, probably for housing. The PCT have recently reversed the decision to close the maternity unit and plan to have birthing facilities in Trowbridge but no beds for post-natal care. The PCC will also have some new facilities such as enhanced out-patients provision, mobile diagnostics for scans, a café and healthy living centre and hopefully some additional space for the development of new local services that will avoid patients having to travel to the district general hospitals.

The neighbourhood team will continue to be developed and is managed by the PCT. These services are not based around the GP practice populations but are run on a team basis across the town.

Sounds good, what's the problem?

The practices have been discussing the re-location of Bradford Road and the development of the PCC for THREE YEARS! It is the PCT's responsibility to develop these services and despite having no opposition from the practices we have not seen any significant progress. No planning application has yet been submitted though there has been some consultation with the cricket club and I believe notice has been served. We are told that a planning application may be submitted soon. The planning process itself is likely to take over a year and then the building will take at least 18 months to build. So, we are looking at another 3 years before Trowbridge might have the facilities it needs.

The re-location of Bradford Road is linked to the development of the PCC and the planning process for the site as a whole, leaving Bradford Road to continue to practice from inadequate premises.

Once the outline planning process has been completed there will follow a tendering process for the development of the site. The PCT will not build or own the building. It will be developed by a third party in line with current government thinking. As yet there are no developers involved. The extension to Adcroft surgery will be owned by the Adcroft / Bradford Road doctors.

What about Lovemead?

We have a modern purpose built surgery that works well apart from the car-park being too small and with our list size growing, as the town's population grows, we are running out of space.

We have been in negotiation with the PCT about this and have demanded that in the plans for the PCC that some space is made available for Lovemead to run services for our patients from that site. We are not re-locating to the hospital site. The PCT so far will not support either the development of a second surgery for Lovemead patients or the re-location of the surgery to another much bigger site elsewhere in the town.

In the meantime we are looking to change our opening hours to even out the pattern of surgery times. This should help a little with the car-park problems. However, we are close to public car-parks (some are even free) and would encourage all patients to consider using these car-parks to help with the problem.

What the doctors in the town agreed to, was a vision of the services provided in the town and an outline plan of how to achieve them. To deliver them we need a strong PCT with good management and a will to make it happen. The PCT is now in a better position financially but has achieved this by cutting services. It now needs to deliver the plan as promised in the "Pathways for Change" process.