

BLOG: 31 August 2016

Improving health services in West Lancashire

Read about our community health services reprocurement in West Lancashire and what the process actually involves

There has been a bit of publicity around our procurement process with rumours spreading of “privatisation” which appears to be raising concern among some of our community. As a public organisation and local healthcare commissioner, it is our duty to be transparent and this is something we remain committed to throughout all of our work including this process. This process is about improving the health and wellbeing of everyone in West Lancashire by developing the health services our local community needs. This process is part of our vision for joined up care known as *Building for The Future*. This aims to help everyone - especially our older population and those living with long-term conditions – have better access to health services, be in more control of their own health and have an individual care plan tailored to their own personal needs, as just some examples. It also about engaging and working with the fantastic voluntary and charitable organisations that exist in West Lancashire - recognising untapped potential and the significant role they can play as partners in improving the health and wellbeing of our population.

Procuring is no simple feat. It involves us following a stringent process which must meet national guidance and legislation. To do this, we have experienced commissioners and clinicians working on this, as well as continuous professional procurement and legal advice in place to further support our team. Considering our vision for joined up care and the procurement models available, we selected the ‘competitive dialogue’ route. This is because we know we have one chance to get this absolutely right and this approach allows for us to have lengthy, in depth discussions with the potential providers and we can jointly develop what is best suited for the needs of the local community of West Lancashire. We feel confident these dialogue discussions within this chosen competitive dialogue approach will make all the difference to the end result we achieve.

So about the process; all CCGs must adhere to national procurement legislation which requires us to enable both NHS and independent providers to compete. All bidders are then evaluated against the same set criteria. After evaluation within our process, four organisations were asked to participate in further dialogue discussions with us. At this Pre-Qualification Questionnaire stage, some bidders (including the main current provider) did not make it through to the next stage as they did not make the standard required to proceed.

Those organisations that we are having dialogue with and awaiting final bids from are as follows:

- Community health services; Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust, Optum Health Solutions (UK) Ltd, Virgin Care Services and Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.
- Urgent care services; Optum Health Solutions (UK) Ltd and Virgin Care Services.

You will note that two of these organisations are from the independent sector and two are local NHS providers who are already commissioned to provide services within West Lancashire by the CCG (Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust provides mental health and some children's services and Bridgewater Community NHS Foundation Trust supports community services in cross boundary working in the Wigan area). The way the process works measures all potential bidders equally so those most successful in the process (regardless of sector) proceed. This process is not set by us locally but part of national regulations we must follow. It is important that our local community understand that any services commissioned within this process will continue to be delivered as part of the NHS and will remain free at the point of contact as with any provision of NHS care.

We have recently completed our final round of confidential discussions with the above organisations. In September 2016 they will submit their final bid. Following evaluation, a decision will be made (by the CCG board made up of local GPs, health commissioners, lay members and clinical leads including secondary care doctor). The CCG intends to announce a successful bidder(s) in autumn 2016. As soon as we are through the legal standstill period of 10 days which prevents the CCG from announcing the results, all stakeholders will be notified of the outcome. Then begins what we call the mobilisation phase where the successful bidder(s) works closely with the existing provider and incumbent staff (those delivering the service now) to prepare to deliver the service from April 2017. The CCG stays involved in the process during the mobilisation phase and beyond, and the new provider continues to be monitored and must provide quality assurances to us as commissioner of such NHS services in West Lancashire.

Yes, this process is complex but this is about striving for the best possible health services for the people of West Lancashire. There are lots of facts and information out there that we have put into the public domain, including a shortened document which summarises our vision for joined up care and how it will benefit you. We urge anyone with an interest in this process to read and fully understand the facts around the process. We are equally very happy to answer any questions you may have.

To help with this, we have also created a dedicated webpage for more information which is regularly updated: <http://www.westlancashireccg.nhs.uk/have-your-say/community-health-services/>

If you need more information, please contact us via 01695 588 203 or myview@westlancashireccg.nhs.uk