



MEDIA STATEMENT

24th August 2007

RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S DECISION
IN RELATION TO HEALTHY FUTURES

Tim Presswood, Chair of the Healthy Futures Joint Committee of Primary Care Trusts said:

“We are grateful to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel for their comprehensive review of the Healthy Futures proposals and we welcome the certainty provided by today’s decision by the Secretary of State.

“It is now three years since proposals to reorganise adult healthcare in the north east of Greater Manchester were first discussed and more than a year since the end of our public consultation on the options for change. Throughout this process, patients, healthcare professionals, non-clinical staff, the public and other stakeholders have played a vital role in shaping the future of their local health services. Their contribution has been well informed, impassioned and often very vocal and, on behalf of the Joint Committee of Primary Care Trusts and the Healthy Futures consultation team, I would like to thank everyone who participated for their contribution.

“Our sole objective throughout this process has been to ensure that health services in the area were able to provide the highest standard of care in the face of increasing numbers of patients with long-term conditions, the rapid advances in medical treatments and technologies and need to provide world-class specialist care around the clock. We believe that the Healthy Futures proposals were the best possible option for achieving that.

“The primary care trusts will now begin work, with their colleagues at Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and the North West Ambulance Service, on implementing the changes endorsed by the Secretary of State. This will be done in line with all the

IRP's recommendations, including the specific caveats about prioritising community based services, having robust structures and plans, and ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place for Fairfield's A&E department.

"Implementing these changes will be a lengthy process, lasting up to five years, and patients, NHS staff and other stakeholders will be fully engaged throughout. Full details of our plans for patient engagement will be published in the next couple of months, but I can today announce that we will be conducting an information and engagement roadshow across the north east of Greater Manchester and Rossendale in mid October. This will be an opportunity for everyone to come along, hear more about what today's decision means for them and find out how they can get involved in the next stage of the process."

Dr Derek Fletcher, a GP and Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee, said:

"Today's decision means we can now begin the serious business of developing and providing first-class health services for the people of the north east of Greater Manchester. The Secretary of State has put an end to months of uncertainty over the future of our local NHS services. And, like Tim, I welcome that.

"Change is never easy, but these plans have come about because there was overwhelming agreement among clinicians in the area, both in hospitals and in primary care, that things needed to change. The IRP, an independent panel of experts, conducted a four-months-long review of the issues and agreed that these changes would result in a better deal for patients.

"There will be a big expansion of community based healthcare, with much greater efforts to help people with long-term conditions stay healthy and avoid hospital. This will be achieved through closer monitoring to spot warning signs and respond to them, before someone suddenly gets so sick they need hospital treatment. Community based assessment, diagnostic and treatment centres will provide quick and easy access to specialist opinions, often in a one-stop-shop, cutting waiting lists and freeing up consultants to deal with those patients who really do need hospital care.

“And specialist acute services will be available 24 hours a day because, by concentrating staff and resources onto fewer sites, we will be able to provide 24/7 cover, develop centres of excellence and enable clinicians to remain right at the top of their game.

“In summary, this is good news for patients and we genuinely believe that once services are being provided in line with these plans, patients will be very happy with the quality of care they receive.”

Neil Hulton, Divisional Medical Director for Surgery at Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, which runs Fairfield General Hospital, North Manchester General Hospital, Rochdale Infirmary and the Royal Oldham Hospital, said:

“This decision is good news for patients. It means we are able to move forward and provide patients with centres of excellence, giving safe and sustainable services. Currently, many of our services are stretched across four hospitals. Now, we will be able to give patients access to specialist care, 24 hours a day.”

Ends

For more information, please contact Healthy Futures Communications Manager Maggie Doyle on 0161 655 1461 or 07879 498 574.

Notes to Editors:

1. Patient, public and staff engagement in implementing the Secretary of State's decision and the accompanying recommendations will begin mid October with a roadshow of town centres and hospitals in the north east of Greater Manchester and Rossendale.
2. Healthy Futures is the reconfiguration of adult healthcare at hospitals and in the community in the north east of Greater Manchester. It affects a population of 800,000 people in Bury, Heywood, Middleton, North Manchester, Oldham and Rochdale. Healthy Futures started life in summer 2004 when the primary care trusts (PCTs) and Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS

Trust, which runs the four hospitals in the area, began discussing how to improve local healthcare services and make sure they could cope with the challenges ahead. After engaging clinicians, other NHS staff, patients and the public in discussions and workshops about the general shape health services should take, three options went to public consultation from January to May 2006. After considering all the consultation responses, a Joint Committee of Primary Care Trusts in the affected area decided Option One should be adopted. It is this decision that the Secretary of State has been reviewing. The primary care trusts are: Bury PCT; East Lancashire PCT; Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale PCT; Manchester PCT; and Oldham PCT. (East Lancashire PCT was included because, although it is outside Greater Manchester, some patients from the area use services in Bury and Rochdale.)

3. The Secretary of State's decision follows the Independent Reconfiguration Panel's four-months-long reviews of both Healthy Futures and Making It Better, a separate consultation on inpatient women's, children's and neonatal services in Greater Manchester and High Peak. The IRP's report is available at www.irpanel.org.uk. The IRP is the independent expert on health service change. Set up in 2003, the IRP provides advice to the Secretary of State for Health on disputed proposals for changes to the NHS in England.
4. The Secretary of State's decision was announced today by the Strategic Health Authority, NHS North West. Call NHS North West Communications Manager Stephen Lightbown on 0161 237 2992 / 07824 463577 or email stephen.lightbown@northwest.nhs.uk for more information.
5. To contact the IRP Press Office or arrange interviews with IRP Chair Dr Peter Barrett, call 020 7025 7530 or email IRPpressoffice@trimediahc.com
6. For further information about Making It Better, contact Fiona Smith on 0161 874 5704 / xxxxxxx or fionas@uniquecc.co.uk