

East Kent Transformation Programme

Briefing for Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This briefing provides an update on plans to transform hospital services in East Kent following the decision earlier this year not to include East Kent Hospitals in the next round of national NHS funding.

Background

In 2017 the NHS in East Kent proposed two potential options to transform local hospital services, following extensive engagement with clinicians, patients, the public, and our partners. A capital allocation was required before the NHS could proceed to public consultation.

The National Audit Office identified that East Kent Hospitals was among seven trusts removed from a list used to choose 40 new hospitals announced in October 2020¹. When applications opened for the next round of schemes for investment from the New Hospitals Programme (NHP) in July 2021, the Trust submitted an expression of interest for £460 million to fund either of the two transformation options. A detailed pre-consultation case detailing these options was approved by NHS England in August 2021 and identified as the South East region's priority investment scheme.

The Trust was informed in May 2023 that it had not been selected as one of the next schemes to receive NHP funding. The Department of Health and Social Care received 128 expressions of interest from 100 trusts, including East Kent Hospitals. The five schemes chosen all carried significant safety risks related to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC).

Recent investments to improve services

In recent years the Trust has successfully secured targeted investment for new and improved buildings to improve services including:

- £30 million to expand the emergency departments at Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) and William Harvey hospitals, due to complete later this year;
- £14m for a new orthopaedic surgical centre at Kent and Canterbury Hospital, with four new operating theatres and renovations to wards, opened July 2021;
- £16m for a new 24-bed critical care unit at William Harvey Hospital, opened April 2022;
- £5m to develop the county's first Community Diagnostic Centre at Buckland Hospital to improve access to diagnostic tests and scans, commencing late 2021;
- £5m to expand interventional radiology services at Kent and Canterbury Hospital, with a new theatre and patient facilities opening in May 2022, followed by a newly renovated theatre opening in March 2023.

Current position and next steps

Despite these significant improvements for patients, the lack of NHP funding required to transform services for the long term means that the Trust faces significant clinical and infrastructure safety risks. These will continue to manifest and accelerate without significant new investment to address them. The investment required is significantly greater than the Trust's limited capital resources.

In late 2021 the Trust calculated that at least £211m capital investment was needed maintain safe services over the next five years. This included essential upgrades to our aging hospital estate, some

¹ Progress with the New Hospital Programme. [National Audit Office](#), 17 July 2023.

buildings dating back to the 1930s, and to replace medical devices and equipment that are essential for safe patient care. The Trust is undertaking an updated assessment of the costs associated with critical infrastructure and backlog maintenance, and the emerging and potential future risks.

Maternity

The Trust is seeking £123 million to build new maternity units at QEQM and William Harvey hospitals that meet modern building standards, provide patients and families with a dramatically improved environment to give birth in, and for staff to work in. The birthing rooms at both hospitals are too small to fit essential equipment and the number of staff required in emergency situations. The rooms also lack ensuite facilities for families, or any space for clinical teams to train. At QEQM an additional obstetric theatre is required as currently, if the unit's theatre is busy, patients are taken through the hospital to its main theatres.

External investment is required to deliver this much-needed transformation of both units as without it, maternity alone would consume almost all of the Trust's capital allocation over the next five years (£130m total), preventing investment to address critical infrastructure risks and replacing aging medical equipment.

NHS partners across East Kent, Kent and Medway and the South East region are working together closely to identify sources of additional funding to deliver these improvements for patients and staff.

East Kent Health and Care Partnership Estates Strategy Group

Kent and Medway Integrated Care System is made up of four Health and Care Partnerships whose role it is to bring together hospitals, community care, mental health, GPs, social care, ambulance, local councils and the voluntary sector to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in east Kent. The footprint for East Kent Health and Care Partnership (HCP) includes East Kent Hospitals.

Building a better integrated infrastructure is a key enabler to improving health and care service delivery. East Kent HCP, along with the three other HCPs in Kent and Medway, has been tasked with producing its own Estates Strategy by December 2023. The strategy is expected to include high level plans for the next five years. It will be helpful, where appropriate, to look at a longer period and to base decision on long term population need planning.

East Kent HCP has autonomy to draft the Estates Strategy according to the local population health and care needs. The aim of this work is to set up a series of engagement events with key stakeholders across East Kent including Primary Care, Acute, Community Trusts, Mental Health, Kent Health and Social Care, Voluntary Sector and District Borough Councils to work with system partners to ensure the strategy is co-produced and local feedback and partnership working is achieved. Additionally, the ambition is to design a strategy that can be jointly implemented by all system partners.

The final draft Estates Strategy will go through the Health and Care Partnership Governance group "East Kent Estates Strategy Group" for formal sign off and this will be shared with Kent and Medway ICB Estates team. The priorities that are identified within the Estates Strategy will set out a vision and ambition for estates transformation for the East Kent geography and will provide a foundation for managing business cases for capital investment for the future.

Ends.