

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10:00 FRIDAY 27 JULY 2012

Health merger moves a step closer

Three leading NHS foundation trusts have today moved a step closer to merging to create a single academic healthcare organisation, closely integrated with their university partner. The new organisation would build on the existing partnership between the organisations to deliver benefits for patients, staff and students.

The Boards of Guy's and St Thomas', King's College Hospital and South London and Maudsley NHS foundation trusts have each agreed to continue exploring plans for an organisational merger and a strengthened partnership with King's College London, their joint academic partner. The proposal is set out in a Strategic Outline Case which was approved by each of the Boards and King's College London, although the university would not be a legal partner in any merger.

Professor Sir Robert Lechler, Executive Director, King's Health Partners said:

“The new organisation would mean better care for our patients, a faster translation of research into treatments and an integration of mental and physical health rarely seen elsewhere. It would give us the opportunity to create a world leading institution, capable of attracting the best clinicians, that our patients, communities and staff can be proud of.”

If a full business case for this proposal is approved by the boards of the partner organisations and the regulators, it is hoped that the merger could take legal effect in 2014. The partners, however, recognise that there are uncertainties around the timeline to the new organisation. The regulatory process under the new Health and Social Care Act 2012 is unclear and the implications of a trust special administrator being appointed to resolve the future of South London Healthcare Trust (SLHT) are unknown. The NHS partners are keen to play a constructive part in the SLHT solution and will actively engage with the Department of Health, Monitor and competition authorities to better understand the time scales, while making preparations for a full business case.

The new organisation would have a turnover of about £2.6 billion and around 29,000 staff, but would be structured so that decisions were taken locally, giving staff greater autonomy and making the organisation more accountable to its patients and commissioners.

The four organisations have collaborated for many years and were accredited by the Department of Health as an academic health sciences centre, King's Health Partners in 2009. Working together has led to good examples of better care for patients across the three trusts and better research being undertaken and translated into treatments. The proposal to merge is based on accelerating these benefits and removing some of the structural and cultural obstacles to greater collaboration.

The full business case would test rigorously that the benefits this proposal is based on can be realised and that the risks can be properly managed. There will also be thorough engagement with everyone who might be interested or concerned, including local people and their representatives, our staff, the organisations that provide funding, regulators and other stakeholders. By bringing together three leading NHS organisations with mental health at the core, with a leading university, King's Health Partners will be positioned to make real

improvements to the health of one of the most diverse and challenged communities in the country.

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The Strategic Outline Case can be downloaded at: www.kingshealthpartners.org. For interview requests please contact Sarah Crack, Communications Manager, King's Health Partners sarah.crack@kcl.ac.uk 020 7188 4058.

King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre (AHSC) is a pioneering collaboration between King's College London, and Guy's and St Thomas', King's College Hospital and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trusts.

King's Health Partners is one of only five AHSCs in the UK and brings together an unrivalled range and depth of clinical and research expertise, spanning both physical and mental health. Our combined strengths will drive improvements in care for patients, allowing them to benefit from breakthroughs in medical science and receive leading edge treatment at the earliest possible opportunity.

For more information, visit www.kingshealthpartners.org