

Press Release

7 November – For Immediate Release

**Joint Statement from the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust
and the Reference Group for the NHS Strategic Review of
healthcare in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly**

Service changes to improve and modernise patient care

The Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust is to make a number of service changes designed to improve and modernise patient care and achieve operational efficiency.

The trust is to:

- Increase the proportion of patients treated as day cases
- Improve its bed management systems to ensure hospital beds for inpatients are used more efficiently
- Minimise the use of agency staff
- Manage staff vacancies more effectively
- Extend the pre-admission assessment of patients
- Redesign the clinical administration support services to use skills and expertise more efficiently – this follows several months of consultation with staff
- Establish a new panel of senior managers and clinicians tasked with eliminating any non-essential spending
- Redouble its efforts to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions

The Reference Group for the NHS Strategic Review of healthcare in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly welcomed the announcement. The Reference Group includes councillors and officers from the six district councils in Cornwall and members of the County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In a statement endorsing the changes the Reference Group said, "These changes represent a positive move forward. The fact that these changes were discussed with the Strategic Review Reference Group prior to publication is greatly to be welcomed. We do not consider these changes to be substantive but we believe it is very important the trust does everything in its power to inform patients about the way in which change will affect them."

Changes in the design of clinical services will save the Trust £7m in a full year and will allow it to reduce the total number of beds in use at the Royal Cornwall Hospital in Truro. This will enable the trust to consolidate clinical services and staff into a smaller number of wards and theatres and up to four of the hospital's 29 wards will be closed before the end of this current financial year.

A real advantage for patients will be that far more of them will undergo any tests needed to establish their fitness for surgery a few days before admission, when they will also get detailed information and be able to ask questions about their procedure in advance. Patients can then get a good night's sleep at home before coming in to hospital on the day they have surgery, rather than the day before. This will mean the trust needs fewer beds and pre-admission assessment has the added advantages of reducing the incidence of patients not turning up for their procedure or the inconvenience of last minute postponements because of medical complications.

The changes will also mean that, where clinically appropriate, patients will be able to avoid hospital admission altogether or will be discharged from hospital more rapidly and will continue their care with specialist teams visiting them at home. The evidence suggests that early discharge from hospital leads to better outcomes for patients.

Dr Rob Pitcher, the trust's acting chief executive, said, "We are getting a grip on the challenges we face and finding ways that we can become more efficient at the same time as delivering high quality care. All of the changes we are announcing today are the sort of changes that are being introduced across the NHS. By modernising the way it works, the trust will be able to deliver real benefits for patient care, in many cases reducing the time people need to spend in hospital, AND to ensure it uses resources more effectively and lives within its means. We expect to offer posts in other areas of the Trust to any clinical staff who are displaced by these changes. We will also be reducing our management and administration costs. We anticipate most of the savings will be achieved through natural staff turnover and redeployment. I am determined that we still achieve the important targets set down by the Healthcare Commission."

The PCT's new chief executive, Ann James, said, "The changes being implemented by the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust are all about implementing best practice. They are about changing and improving the way we provide services. Staff at the trust will be adopting new practices, which have already been successfully introduced in other parts of the NHS. This will mean that wherever it is clinically appropriate patients will spend less time in hospital and that can only be a good thing. I have already made clear that pending the outcome of the Strategic Review of healthcare that is now taking place in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly there will not be any hospital closures. I stand by that commitment."

The trust's new chief executive begins work in early January and in late January the strategic review of healthcare in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will be published by the new Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Primary Care Trust.

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A Peninsula Medical School Teaching Hospitals Trust
www.cornwall.nhs.uk/rcht

For further information please contact the Press & Public Relations Office, Royal Cornwall Hospital, Truro, TR1 3LJ. ☎ 01872 252934 during office hours or 01872 250000 for urgent enquiries at other times.