

Shaping our future together

Information about how Weston and UH Bristol are working in partnership and planning for our proposed organisational merger in April 2020

January 2020

An update about the proposed merger between Weston Area Health NHS Trust (WAHT) and University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust (UH Bristol), which is due to take place on 1 April 2020.

Board approves full business case for merger and agrees new name for merged organisation

Our proposal to merge in April 2020 took a significant step forward at the end of November 2019 following Trust board approval of the plans. This decision means we have moved to the next stage which requires review and assessment from our regulators (NHSEI). A final decision to merge will need to be made by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Robert Woolley, chief executive of UH Bristol and WAHT said: "This decision demonstrates a real commitment to merger, which is an exciting opportunity to create a new healthcare provider with a greater purpose.

"By taking everything that's good about Weston and good about UH Bristol, we will create an organisation of which every member can be truly proud."

At the point of merger, the name of the new organisation will be University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust - a real signal that this is the start of something new.

An exciting future for University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust

Significant progress has been made in planning for a successful merger, to create a combined organisation of over 13,000 staff aiming to deliver exceptional local services for local people and specialist services across the South West and beyond.

Significant benefits will come from building on the many years of partnership working between the two Trusts and taking the step to become a single organisation.

The merger will help bring stability to Weston General Hospital, so that it remains at the heart of the community, providing services that meet the needs of its local people.

We will also have a real opportunity to create an even better experience for our patients – ensuring people from North Somerset and surrounding areas will be able to be seen and treated in their local hospital, and improving access to specialist services in both Bristol and Weston through better use of an expanded workforce, estates and facilities.

For example, over 500 older people will be able to have their cataract operation in Weston rather than having to travel to Bristol.

A 13,000+ strong workforce increases our diversity, capacity and resilience, allowing for greater development opportunities for our staff across a much wider portfolio of services, strengthening the knowledge base, peer support and skills and experience of all our employees.

The merger provides an opportunity to share expertise and best practice – particularly in the delivery of exemplar models of frailty, ambulatory and out-of-hospital care. Using the opportunity to develop and learn from each other to create truly joined up care which enables people to stay in their own home, or return home as soon as they no longer need our care.



The roll out of digital technology across the new organisation will enhance and improve the quality and delivery of services across the new organisation, further cementing our Digital Exemplar status. This will not only help our staff to do their jobs more efficiently, but will bring real benefits to patients, who won't have to keep repeating the same information.

We will release untapped potential in our services – particularly in the development of medical and surgical ambulatory care, nurturing innovation and research, and empowering our teams to design services and pathways at the forefront of care.

Bringing our cultures together

An organisational and cultural integration programme is underway to create the conditions pre, during and post-merger to ensure we have an engaged and committed workforce for the future and to develop an inclusive culture, that will attract, develop and retain exceptional people.

When we talk about organisational culture, we mean values, behaviours, beliefs, sense of purpose and generally 'how we do things around here'. You can imagine how all of these cultural elements influence how we provide care and treat our patients.

The programme will include a plan of work and activities that will not only help us to integrate our cultures, but also how we start to build shared values and a vision for the merged organisation. Aligning our vision and values across our Bristol and Weston sites will mean all of us are working towards a shared purpose underpinned by values all of us can get behind. This is imperative to having engaged and happy staff, working in an inclusive culture that attracts, develops and retains exceptional people.

This cultural work recently took a significant step forward when we completed a cultural diagnostic in WAHT. We undertook this work in partnership with the King's Fund and NHS Improvement, which was the first step on our cultural journey and has helped us to understand the 'as is' culture in WAHT. This approach has already been successfully carried out at UH Bristol in recent years. We recruited 18 change champions (some of whom are pictured) in WAHT from a variety of clinical and non-clinical roles who were given specialist training from NHS Improvement to facilitate this work.



The change champions developed a report using data from patient and staff surveys, interviews with WAHT's board of directors and feedback from staff focus groups, which was presented back to the Board. The findings from the diagnostic are helping to shape the cultural and organisational integration plan, which will be implemented once the two trusts merge in April 2020.

In addition, a series of 'Hopes and Fears' workshops have taken place across both trusts to provide staff with the opportunity to voice their thoughts and ideas and ask any questions they might have about the proposed merger, the feedback of which is also helping to shape the development of the cultural integration programme. Further workshops for staff will run throughout February.

Shaping the future of our clinical services

Earlier in 2019, our partnership work took a major step when we launched clinical practice groups (CPGs) across many of our services. CPGs allow clinical and non-clinical colleagues from both Trusts to come together to understand each other's services, using a common approach, and lay the ground for the alignment of policy, process and practice on which seamless patient care can be based inside the merged Trust.



A number of teams including radiology, rheumatology, haematology, oncology, ophthalmology, gynaecology, maternity, critical care, cardiology, paediatrics, care of the elderly and stroke, allied health professions and pathology have or are about to set up CPGs for their areas.

Key milestones

A thorough approvals process of the merger is underway. Key milestones include:

January

- Regulatory and Department of Health and Social Care scrutiny of plans and the process to bring our organisations together.

February

- Regulatory scrutiny continues and final documents and plans for the merger are submitted for approval, including the post-merger integration plan, by relevant Trust Committees.

March

- Each Trust Board is asked separately to approve the transaction, subject to satisfactory completion of the regulatory process
- UH Bristol Council of Governors is asked approve the process
- Final submission and application to merge sent to Department of Health and Social Care for consideration.

April

- Subject to regulatory and Secretary of State approval (as outlined above), UH Bristol NHS Foundation Trust and Weston Area Health NHS Trust merge on 1 April to become University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust
- The employment of WAHT staff (other than those in a small number of services for which different arrangements have been agreed e.g. Specialist Children's Community Health Services) transfers to the new organisation.

Questions and feedback

If you have a question or any feedback about our upcoming merger, you can send this to ubh-tr.uhbristolwestonpartnership@nhs.net

If you would like to stop receiving these updates, please let us know via the email above and we will remove you from the mailing list.

