

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 10th April 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Health & Community

SUBJECT: North Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust
Application for Foundation Status

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide an overview of the application for Foundation Status by North Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Board supports the application for Foundation Status and the opportunities this will bring for the people of Halton.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background

3.1.1 Under the Health & Social Care Act 2003, North Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust has applied to become an NHS Foundation Trust (often called Foundation Hospitals and their application is attached at Appendix 1). The consultation period of 12 weeks commenced on 14th January 2008 and ends on 11th April 2008, with a decision to be taken by the Summer 2008. In addition to the detailed consultation document, the consultation process was supported by an Executive Summary, and a number of road shows (including one at The Brindley and one at Halton Stadium) with staff and partner organisations.

3.1.2 North Cheshire Hospitals Trust provides the full range of general treatments to its local population covering Warrington and Halton. There are 2 principal sites, Warrington Hospital and Halton General Hospital, comprising 600 beds across both sites. The Trust has an annual budget of over £155 million.

3.1.3 The Trust was rated as "good" for its quality of services in the latest Healthcare Commission health check ratings - improving from "fair" the year before.

3.2 What Does Foundation Status Mean?

3.2.1 When an organisation becomes a Foundation Trust, this means it will:-

- have more autonomy in making decisions about services provided
- be accountable to members (staff, patients and local people) rather than directly to the Secretary of State
- remain part of the NHS
- be accountable to NHS Commissioners through legally binding contracts
- be approved by the Independent Regulator “Monitor” (which authorises and monitors NHS Foundation Trusts)

3.2.2 The Trust believes that flexibility and freedoms arising from Foundation Status will enhance their ability to shape healthcare services in response to the above average levels of chronic diseases arising from the severe health inequalities, social disadvantage and social exclusion evident in the population it serves. The Trust is also committed to strengthening their links with the local community through the introduction of members and governors. There is also a financial benefit in being able to retain or build up surpluses as well as borrow monies to develop services.

3.3 Implications Of Achieving Foundation Status For The People Of Halton

3.3.1 The additional flexibility and autonomy will enhance the Trust’s ability to:

- invest in services to bring down waiting times
- reduce lengths of stay and cancelled operations
- improve provision of emergency care and intensive care services
- develop minimally invasive surgery services
- improve diagnostic services
- expand cardiology and orthopaedic services
- maintain high levels of patient and staff satisfaction

3.2.2 There is effective partnership arrangements with the Trust in a number of areas, including intermediate care. The Council will need to ensure that these, and other service developments, continue to flourish as the Trust moves to Foundation Status.

3.4 Governance Arrangements

3.4.1 As part of being controlled and run locally, governance and accountability will be improved by the establishment of:

- a Governors Council made up from elected public governors, representatives from key stakeholders/partner organisations such as Local Authorities/PCTs and staff governors. None of the governors will be remunerated. Full details are provided in the following table.

Total Make-up of the Governors Council	
Constituency	No of Governors
Public	
Warrington residents	9
Halton residents	5
Former patients or carers who live outside Warrington and Halton	1
Total Public Governors	15
Staff Governors	5
Partner Organisation Governors	9
Total Governors Council	29

The Partner Organisation Governors will include: "One representative from Warrington Borough Council and one from Halton Borough Council".

3.4.2 The 5 Halton residents would be drawn from the following ward groups:

Proposed Public Governor Ward Groupings
1. Daresbury, Windmill Hill, Norton North, Castlefields
2. Beechwood, Mersey, Heath, Grange
3. Norton South, Halton Brook, Halton Lea
4. Appleton, Farnworth, Hough Green, Halton View
5. Broadheath, Ditton, Hale, Kingsway, Riverside

The Governors Council will be able to influence decisions about spending and service development as well as ensuring the Trust carries out its duties in line with NHS values and principles.

3.4.3 Members of the Healthy Halton PPB, held on 11th March 2008, received a report and presentation from Catherine Beardshaw, Chief Executive of North

Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust (NCHT) regarding the consultation currently being undertaken on the Foundation Trust status for NCHT.

- 3.4.4 The Board noted the report and presentation and discussed ways in which the Trust could promote their services and work within the Borough.

8.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Foundation Trust will be able to have more autonomy in making decisions about how services are provided locally.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None identified.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

10.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Please see 'Healthy Halton' below

10.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None identified.

10.3 A Healthy Halton

In supporting NCHT's proposal to become an NHS Foundation Trust, this clearly demonstrated the Council's commitment, as a major stakeholder, in recognising the needs of the local community in promoting their health and wellbeing within the Community.

Foundation Trust status will mean that NCHT will involve the local community more in the development of services at Halton Hospital through local people being elected as Governors etc, allow things to get done faster by having greater financial freedom, be able to invest more in local services and secure the long term future of Halton Hospital.

10.4 A Safer Halton

None identified.

10.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

11.0 RISK ANALYSIS

11.1 Foundation status will increase the exposure of the Trust to a competitive market.

11.2 The lead up to applying for Foundation Status and a successful outcome may distract from the delivery of patient care.

12.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

12.1 The proposals to formulate a Foundation Trust would not mean any changes to the current policies.

16.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

16.1 None identified.