

Fit for The Future – Planned General Surgery

NHS partners in Gloucestershire have set out their vision and proposals for the future of specialist hospital care in the County as part of the Fit For The Future (FFTF) programme and embarked upon an ambitious staff and public consultation, which ran from October-December 2020. The consultation included proposals to strengthen five specialist hospital services for Gloucestershire.

Despite the potential challenges of the pandemic, NHS partners have worked hard to deliver a comprehensive range of consultation activities that sought to gather views from colleagues and local people and the result of this work is now available online: [Fit For The Future](#). Many people, including staff working in the hospitals, shared their views on-line, via email, by telephone or face to face.

On Thursday 4 February the Trust Leadership Team (TLT) at Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust explored in detail the configuration options presented for one of the five specialist services, Planned Lower GI (colorectal) General Surgery.

The process was guided by examining the two proposed options (the centralisation at Cheltenham General Hospital or Gloucestershire Royal Hospital) against six domains: Quality of Care; Access to Care; Deliverability; Workforce; Strategic Fit; and Acceptability.

The discussion benefited from presentations followed by a question and answer session, with clinical leads from General Surgery. Both proposals had better outcomes for patients at their heart and many benefits.

However, it was evident as a result of the debate that there was an alternative, potentially even better option, that includes the best elements from the two options presented and notably, the opportunity to deliver even more planned elective surgery from the Cheltenham Hospital site.

This opportunity to treat more patients in a Centre of Excellence for planned surgical care, was also something that came through the consultation feedback from both public contributors, but also staff, as a result of learning from the temporary service changes implemented in response to the pandemic.

Further work will now begin with the General Surgery Team to define this new, emerging option. The focus on the option will explore the opportunity to deliver:

- Planned High Risk Upper Gastrointestinal (GI) and Lower Gastrointestinal (Colorectal) surgery at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital
- Planned complex and routine inpatient and day case surgery in both Upper GI and Colorectal at Cheltenham General Hospital

From the outset of this process, the Trust has been clear that consultation feedback was an important part of the decision making process and this outcome demonstrates the influence of the public and staff voice on the shape of health services in the County. As a result it is important that more time is taken to explore the new option for Planned General Surgery.

Recommendations to decision makers will be included in the Fit for the Future Decision Making Business Case (DMBC) presented to the Trust Board in March 2021 and any

proposed changes to the location of planned Upper GI services would be subject to further public and staff involvement.

The consultation has illustrated the importance of listening to what matters and changing proposals as a result, particularly where there are clear benefits for patients and colleagues, and the Trust will continue to ensure staff and local people are able to can get involved and have their say.