

Report title: Transfer of community paediatric therapies services in North East Essex from ESNEFT (North East Essex Community Services) to HCRG Care Group	
Report to: Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author:	
Date: 5 October 2023	For: Discussion
Enquiries to: Richard Buttress, Democratic Services Manager (richard.buttress3@essex.gov.uk) or Freddey Ayres, Democratic Services Officer (freddey.ayres2@essex.gov.uk)	
County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 1 September 2023, the NEECS paediatric therapies service that includes paediatric physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, continence, and associated admin transferred to HCRG Care Group from East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT).
- 1.2 HCRG Care Group provide 0-19 children's services across Essex. In west Essex, they also run community paediatric therapy services, which has enabled integration and helps to align north east Essex with the rest of the county. ESNEFT and HCRG Care Group management teams worked together over the summer months to ensure that the transfer took place smoothly. Patients will continue to be treated by the same clinical team, most likely in the same location as have done in the past.
- 1.3 The transfer took place under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations (TUPE). TUPE ensures that no staff will be made redundant as a result of this transfer, and their terms and conditions of employment will remain. At total of 54 staff transferred with the service. These staff were a mixture of nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, administrators, assistant roles, and the service lead.

2. Background

- 2.1 When Anglia Community Enterprises (ACE) ended their service in 2021 following a Suffolk and North Essex Integrated Care Board (SNEE ICB) procurement for North East Essex Integrated Community Services (NICS). ESNEFT and HCRG Care Group (at that point called Virgin Care) were part of a joint bid, who were successful in securing a 10-year contract. That group is a collaborative that also includes GP Primary Choice Ltd, Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT), SNEE ICB and Essex County Council (ECC).
- 2.2 At the start of this process, it was agreed that ESNEFT would run all the clinical services (as the Head Provider) that sat with ACE previously, for the first two years of the new contract.
- 2.3 During the first half of this year, it was agreed that the service would transfer to HCRG Care Group and start on 1 September 2023. ESNEFT as Head Provider

for NICS have entered into an NHS sub-contract with HCRG Care Group which will provide continuity of service and assurances around the quality and delivery of care for the people of north east Essex on behalf of the Commissioners.

3. Public and patient engagement

- 3.1 A cross-organisational group coordinated the transfer, which took place on 1 September 2023. Their task was to create a smooth transition that would reduce the risk of disruption to patient care.
- 3.2 On 13 June 2023, a joint letter was sent from the clinical leads representing ESNEFT and HCRG Care Group explaining the changes and what parents and guardians, along with their children, could expect from 1 September 2023. Before that date, it was noted that the service was expected to carry on as normal under the new management arrangements.
- 3.3 On 30 June 2023, a letter was sent to Cllr Henry, Chairman of Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) from Alison Armstrong, Director of NEECS and Richard Watson, Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Strategy and Transformation, Suffolk and North Essex Integrated Care Board. The letter was acknowledged with an invitation to present a paper on the process at a future HOSC meeting. The committee had also previously been briefed in 2021 of the TUPE process taking place at a later date.
- 3.4 During preparation for transfer it was identified that a small cohort of patients (fewer than 10) would not transfer due to being out of area referrals. Parents and guardians of these patients were written to directly on the 23 August 2023, with more details on how care would be provided by remaining within the ESNEFT service.
- 3.5 Key public representative stakeholders, either as individuals or leads of partnership organisations, were directly mailed starting with the Chair of ECC HOSC. An explanation of the process along with reasons for the change taking place was provided in the letter.
- 3.6 Other stakeholders such as contractors and suppliers for the service were contacted through normal channels of communication from representatives at ESNEFT who they correspond with about the change process and what they would need to do to continue business as usual.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 We are confident that this transfer has not created any significant change to those that currently use these services. Any changes to the service will be minimal - patients and their families may notice slight alternations to such things as corporate branding on signage, uniforms, and in letters following the transfer.
- 4.2 ESNEFT will continue to provide community care services in all other areas as they have done before and will continue to do so, as agreed with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and will continue to manage the contract with HCRG Care Group on behalf of the residents of north east Essex.