



**NHS South East Essex
and NHS South West Essex**

Phoenix Court
Christopher Martin Road
Basildon
Essex
SS14 3HG

Tel: 01268 705000
Fax: 01268 705100
www.southessex.nhs.uk

10 January 2013

Dear Colleague

CHANGES TO LOCAL PATHOLOGY SERVICES

As part of a bigger project across the whole of the East of England, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in south Essex have recommended the redesign of pathology services. This follows an East of England service design programme, which subject to contract, will concentrate GP tests in fewer laboratories to maximise expertise, economies of scale and maintenance of high quality standards. At a time of significant financial pressures in the NHS, this would relieve such pressure for commissioners whilst maintaining and providing a high quality service.

Further to recent local press coverage in The Echo, I would like to reassure you and any residents of south Essex who are concerned about proposed changes to the way local blood samples are analysed.

I need to stress that proposals to redesign pathology services are not yet final. They are subject to a contract which will require a number of conditions to be met to assure GPs and CCGs about the quality, logistics and effectiveness of the proposed new system. These conditions have already been the subject of a dialogue over several months.

A contract will not be signed unless the CCGs have total confidence and assurance that the new service is fully compliant with required quality standards, financial requirements and other conditions. Southend CCG is inviting local GPs and a patient representative from Southend to be part of the decision making process to ensure all conditions are met before a final decision is made. If any members of the public want to be involved they should contact: southend.ccg@nhs.net or call 01702 314282. Other CCGs in Essex will be involving their lay members on the CCG Board and their patient involvement groups in the final decision.



NHS South Essex
NHS South Essex is a cluster of South East Essex PCT and South West Essex PCT
Chair: Katherine Kirk
Chief Executive: Andrew Pike
Phoenix Court, Christopher Martin Road,
Basildon, Essex SS14 3HG
Telephone: 01268 705000 Fax: 01268 705100



The proposal would see pathology services transfer from Basildon and Southend Hospitals to a new consortium of hospital trusts in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex. This is the culmination of a two year review programme that has been led by pathologists and commissioners. This work has been sponsored and carried forward by the NHS Midlands and East of England Strategic Health Authority and the decision about the contract will eventually rest with each CCG in Essex.

Both Southend CCG and the PCT Cluster Board have had extensive discussions that considered the risks and opportunities presented by this case, as well as the need to ensure that due commissioning process is appropriately undertaken.

Amongst the risks considered by the CCGs and PCT Board were:

- the impact on patient care
- the stability of local hospital services
- the quality of the proposed solution
- the logistical arrangements for safe collection and transportation of samples
- the effectiveness of the electronic distribution of results
- access to urgent pathology services
- turnaround of results and business continuity.

The outcome of the Board's discussions was in principle to support this proposal, subject to a number of caveats being met and assurance they will be delivered and contractually binding.

These caveats include sufficient assurance/evidence that local CCGs all agree that the below conditions have been met:

- The quality of the services will be comparable as a minimum with the current service.
- The logistics of providing timely results and historic medical information to those that need to see them are adequate.
- Contingency plans are in place for transport of specimens.
- Adequate clinical governance and access to clinical experts for GPs is clear and robust, and agreed by all parties as safe, effective and deliverable.
- Plans to include local trusts in sub-contracting are agreed.
- All risks have been thoroughly investigated and mitigated during transition and beyond.
- Blood taking (phlebotomy) arrangements are unchanged.
- There is no financial risk and savings are realised.

Once commissioners are satisfied that the new service is fully compliant with required quality standards, financial requirements and other conditions, the contract will be signed by each CCG in Essex. Suitable arrangements will then be put in place to ensure that the new provider can meet all requirements set out within the contract.

As you can see from the above, there is a significant amount of detail and local assurance needed before our CCGs and PCT Cluster Board can agree to this contract being signed. We would like to reassure local residents that there are many notable service and clinical benefits arising from this proposed change in service. These include increased opening hours to meet more effectively the needs of clinicians and their patients, electronic tracking of samples, a rigorous monthly monitoring regime and financial savings for both patients and tax payers.

I hope the above is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Pike', with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Andrew Pike
Chief Executive, NHS South Essex