

Health shake up plans on track

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Leicester General Hospital; focus on community services

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Plans are on track for the biggest ever shake-up of health services to plug a predicted £400 million annual cash shortfall by 2019, according to officials leading changes.

They believe health organisations across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are now working together to improve care for patients and make services more efficient.

Key areas of the review include urgent care, maternity and newborn services, children's services, learning disability provision, planned care for frail older people and those with long term conditions and mental health services.

The review, known as Better Care Together, is also likely to see hospital services moved to Leicester Royal Infirmary and Glenfield hospital with the Leicester General Hospital site more of a base for community services.

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Toby Sanders, joint responsible officer for the shake-up, described the past year as “one of hard graft but we have got to a really exciting place.”

Mr Sanders, who is also managing director of the West Leicestershire clinical commissioning group (CCG), said changes to move services out of hospital into the community are already taking place with schemes such as the acute visiting service which assesses patients at home.

He added over the next year he expected one of the biggest changes would come in the way GPs work and with a wider range of service in community hospitals.

Professor Azhar Farooqi, chairman of the Leicester City CCG and clinical lead for the programme, said: “The atmosphere between organisations has changed.

“There is much more collaborative working.

“In the next year we are really going to have to step up activity without any loss in the quality of service.

“This time next year I expect to see more seven day working in primary care and more services provided in the community.”

Members of the Leicester Mercury Patients’ Panel met with key members of the programme board this week.

Eric Charlesworth, chairman of the panel, said: “Better Care Together is a complex process with inherent risks.

“Further information and assurances are being sought on financing, the number of beds required to meet demand, social care evidence of partnership working, all of which need to lead to improved affordable care.

“There must be effective scrutiny by the public and authorities to challenge or confirm and understand the proposals.”