Community health services in Portsmouth and the future of the St James’ Hospital site

Update: Summer 2014

In Outline

Following the organisational changes to the NHS in April 2013, Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group, Solent NHS and NHS Property Services have been working together to look at how the main community health sites at St James’ and St Mary’s in Portsmouth are used. The sites are only a mile apart and have a long and venerable history of serving the city – St James’ since 1875 – but some of the buildings, particularly the original Victorian asylum buildings at St James’, are no longer suitable for 21st century healthcare. At the same time, the sites are costing the NHS a great deal of money to maintain and run and this could be far better spent on improving the health of the local people, rather than on bricks and mortar.

Quite simply, we believe we can use our existing buildings much more efficiently at both St Mary’s and St James’ allowing us to vacate the older, most expensive ones and concentrate services in the more modern facilities. The savings will be considerable - millions of pounds a year - which we can use to invest in the buildings we wish to keep and in the services we provide to the community.

Both St Mary’s and St James’ will continue their tradition of providing healthcare to the people of Portsmouth, but in facilities appropriate to the 21st century. Likewise, all the savings we have identified are coming from money currently spent on buildings and supporting services; none is coming from front-line care. Indeed, our plans will increase funding to patient services.

Our plans will improve patient services by focusing activity in higher quality buildings, which are being refurbished, and the changes will save the local NHS around £3m a year – money which can be diverted from maintaining unnecessary buildings and instead used more directly for patient care.

Below we describe briefly each site, the challenges we face on each and how we plan to solve them.

St Mary’s Community Health Campus

St Mary’s was Portsmouth’s main general hospital until 2009, when the new Queen Alexandra Hospital was opened. Part of St Mary’s was retained and it is now the city’s main centre for community health services. It is a compact site with relatively modern buildings, refurbished in recent years. Nevertheless, the move of the acute services to the Queen Alexandra Hospital in 2009 has left two floors still empty in one of the main blocks, even on the much reduced campus. Reusing this good quality space, which has been dormant for five years, is one of our priorities in order to make best use of St Mary’s.
There is over 3,000m² of vacant space at St Mary’s. Our plans involve investing more than £4m to refurbish this and return it to clinical use.

St James’ Hospital Site

St James’ was built as a Victorian asylum and its imposing main building dates from 1875. To this day, the hospital continues to provide care and support to those suffering mental health problems, although now in modern, purpose-built facilities centred on the Orchards and Limes buildings on the eastern part of the site.

The main Victorian building is now largely an administrative centre, used as a base for community health teams, offices for management teams and support facilities, such as building maintenance or catering. All the original wards have either been converted into office space or are empty. There are no patient beds in the main building, which is listed and expensive to run.
Although reduced over the years, the hospital site is still large and rambling. Apart from the mental health facilities and the Victorian main building, there are a number of other buildings - some in poor condition. Some are already empty, such as Yew House, Fair Oak and West Lodge. Reducing the size and cost of St James’ is a key priority.

Our Plans

The vacant space at St Mary’s and at other healthcare facilities in Portsmouth provides the ideal opportunity to move activity from the most expensive, poor quality and outdated buildings at St James’, with the proceeds from the sale of the surplus land and buildings helping to fund better facilities for patients at both St Mary’s and St James’.

In brief:

- St Mary’s will continue to be the main centre for community services in Portsmouth, with its buildings fully used and with improved parking facilities.
- St James’ will continue to be the focus for mental health services centred on the modern facilities of Orchards and Limes, together with the Kite, Baytrees and Falcon buildings.
- The remaining buildings on the St James’ site will be progressively emptied, starting with Yews, Fair Oak, Beeches and the CDC/Harbour School in summer 2015 (Phase 1) followed by the main Victorian asylum building together with its associated buildings (Langstone, Turner and Kestrel) by Spring 2017 (Phase 2).

Plans for Phase 1 are already fully developed and will deliver significant improvement to healthcare services. The Child Development Centre (CDC) will move to the Battenburg Avenue Clinic, bringing paediatric and therapy services together and creating a focus for children’s services. The clinic is in a community setting with an established child and family presence, close to The Willows Centre for Children and day-nursery - much more appropriate for children and their families.

The pain clinic service at The Beeches will move to St Mary’s from St James’ to be alongside other community health services. St Mary’s will also house the new Podiatry Centre, offering clinics six-days-a-week and bringing together services currently split between several locations, including St Mary’s, St James’ and the Battenburg Avenue Clinic.

Currently, Portsmouth City Council occupies the Harbour School site adjacent to the CDC. The 60-year lease agreed in 1966 contains a 12-month notice provision. This notice has been served and the site will be vacated following the end of the 2014/15 school year. NHS Property Services and Portsmouth City Council remain in close discussion over this and are working to try to find the best possible solution going forward for all parties involved, including the school.
Detailed plans for Phase 2 will be worked up in through the rest of 2014 and we expect to achieve further benefits to patient care by bringing together services in more appropriate surroundings. This will involve a significant level of investment in improved patient facilities and, potentially, a new building on the retained part of the St James’ site.

**Future of any surplus land and buildings**

Our plans will release land and buildings at St James’ from NHS use, including the main Victorian asylum building. What happens to it then will be decided by the council’s normal planning processes. To date, the city council’s Local Plan and emerging site allocations proposal indicate that the site could be suitable for housing, should parts of it no longer be needed for the NHS.

We are therefore developing a masterplan for the site and are considering whether we should seek planning permissions for the residential development of any surplus land and buildings before we sell them - otherwise we may not raise as much as we should from the sale to reinvest in the NHS. We will, of course, respect the cricket pitch at the St James’ site.

**Consultation**

The work has involved Portsmouth CCG, as the commissioner of most local health services; Solent NHS Trust, the main provider of community services in Portsmouth; and NHS Property Services, as a major NHS landowner, including the St James’ site.

Any changes we make to health care provision, including where services are sited, must also be agreed by the city’s Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and we have kept the Panel fully informed as our plans have developed, making presentations to both their February and July 2014 meetings.

We are also aware of the intense local interest in the future of the St James’ site in particular. In June we sent a letter to 2,300 local homes introducing these plans and inviting residents to attend our first public drop-in session in July. This attracted more than 100 attendees. We have a second one planned for September, to further explain our proposals and listen to residents’ concerns.

We also presented and took questions at the Milton Forum meeting in June. Our plans affect other organisations that share our sites, such as the Shaw Trust and the Harbour School at St James’. We are already working with those affected by the first phase to ensure they have their own plans in place and an appropriate level of compensation, if provided for in their leases with us.