

PRESS RELEASE

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Contracts signed in groundbreaking Hinchingsbrooke hospital franchise

Contracts were signed yesterday evening between Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust and Circle, paving the way for a groundbreaking new model of management for this Huntingdonshire NHS acute hospital. Via a unique franchise, Circle will take over the management of the hospital from 1 February 2012.

Circle was chosen as the preferred bidder to run the Trust in November 2010 following a rigorous thirteen month procurement process, which began in October 2009. Today's announcement follows an extensive 12 month period of scrutiny by the Department of Health to ensure the new franchise will provide the best outcome for patients, the local community and staff working at the Trust.

Following the announcement last year, both Circle and Hinchingsbrooke staff have met regularly to build the solid foundations that will take the Trust forward for the next ten years. Now staff are being invited to contribute their ideas to plan for the hospital's future.

The Hinchingsbrooke Next Steps project is being managed by the Strategic Projects Team at NHS Midlands and East. Dr Stephen Dunn, its Director of Policy and Strategy, said: "This is a momentous day. Without this partnership, the future for Hinchingsbrooke could have been uncertain. Now, we have a solution which aims to repay the hospital's taxpayer debt of almost £40m, as well as giving it the best chance of a sustainable future. Patients will continue to receive high quality NHS services from NHS staff in the NHS hospital they know. This is not privatisation. Staff and assets will remain in the NHS."

Dr Dunn continued: "Circle secured this franchise following an open competition. They outshone the best of the best from the NHS and independent sectors. This will usher in a new era for this much loved local hospital."

Nigel Beverley, Interim Chief Executive for Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust, said: “We have been encouraged by Circle’s enthusiasm, and the efforts they have taken to meet with staff, patients and our other partners. Circle recognises our achievements at the Trust and we look forward to working with them to develop the hospital’s services into the future.”

Ali Parsa, Circle’s Chief Executive, added: “At a time when some healthcare commentators say the solution for small district general hospitals is simply to merge or be shut down, we believe NHS Midlands and East’s courage and zeal for innovation will enable us to show how clinician and staff control can provide a more sustainable alternative. Our partners have now met hundreds of Hinchingsbrooke staff, and we know that we share a core value of prioritising patients above all else. Circle arrives not with a top-down plan to impose change, but with a proven methodology of unleashing NHS professionals’ talent through clinical leadership and devolved decision-making”.

Dr Malav Bhimpuria on behalf of Hunts Care Partners and Hunts Health, local clinical commissioning groups, said: “As local GPs, we are pleased that the hospital can now look forward to a more certain future. We support a hospital in Huntingdon that can serve local patients and deliver the quality of care that they should expect. We will continue to work closely with the hospital so that the right level of services is delivered locally.”

Dr Sushil Jathanna, Chief Executive of NHS Cambridgeshire and NHS Peterborough, said: “The end of the long period of uncertainty is good news for the staff of Hinchingsbrooke and the local people who use the hospital. We look forward to working with Circle to ensure that good quality, sustainable services are provided locally.”

Andrew MacPherson, Director of the Strategic Projects Team co-ordinating the project, added: “We would like to thank the wide range of stakeholders from Board members to clinicians and patient representatives, who have worked with us in bringing this initiative to today’s conclusion. They have shown great commitment, patience, courage and support for this groundbreaking contribution to sustainable public healthcare”.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust, NHS Cambridgeshire and NHS Midlands and East have been working together to find a new partner to manage Huntingdonshire's Hinchingsbrooke hospital. The clinical and non-clinical services at Hinchingsbrooke hospital - other than where identified below - will be provided, from 1 February 2012, by the Trust under the management of Circle, via an innovative franchise agreement. This arrangement ensures that a full range of high quality acute hospital services - including accident and emergency and maternity services - will continue to be provided for local people at Hinchingsbrooke, as agreed at the end of the 2007 public consultation, for as long as commissioners request it.
- The Secretary of State's Intervention Order, permitting the contract, was signed on 9 November.
- Under the contract staff and assets will remain within the NHS, and patients will continue to receive NHS services.
- Circle is a 49.9% employee owned social enterprise that forms the largest partnership of clinicians in Europe - over 2000. Circle is co-owned and managed by the doctors, nurses and all staff who work in Circle's hospitals, treatment centres and clinics. Circle has significant experience of transforming NHS services from their Nottingham and Burton day surgery hospitals, where they treat around 130,000 NHS patients per annum.
- Hinchingsbrooke hospital, which opened in 1983, is a modern purpose-built building, with 223 general and acute beds providing quality up-to-date healthcare, with an additional 23 beds within the maternity unit, nine beds in critical care and 24 specifically for day cases, alongside 23 cabins located in the Treatment Centre, the £22million unit which opened in November 2005. More than for 161,000 people in Huntingdonshire and the surrounding areas rely on the hospital for a range of services.
- Services on the Hinchingsbrooke hospital site provided by other organisations, such as Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust, through contractual arrangements with NHS Cambridgeshire, are unaffected by this franchise.
- The Hinchingsbrooke Next Steps project is being managed by NHS Midlands and East's Strategic Projects Team led by Andrew MacPherson, Director of Strategic Projects. This team of specialists works in partnership to develop and deliver positive change for NHS services. Working closely with the healthcare marketplace and the stakeholders, it develops, supports and delivers transactions for the NHS that drive up the quality of patient experience, safety and care, clinical excellence, public service and value for money. The team received support from PricewaterhouseCooper and Wragge & Co.
- Further information about the Hinchingsbrooke Next Steps project can be found at www.eoe.nhs.uk/strategicprojects or by calling 0800 923 3001.

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