

IJB backs GP practice remodelling to boost primary care sustainability across city

Aberdeen Integration Joint Board (IJB) members have supported proposals to remodel the management of six city practices currently managed by Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership (ACHSCP) on behalf of NHS Grampian.

A report to the board recommended that the Partnership should begin a procurement process to identify suitably qualified parties to operate the six as a single independent business and work with all staff to deliver improvements and innovations.

ACHSCP Chief officer Sandra McLeod told the board: “We embarked upon remodelling with a clear purpose – to improve and enhance our GP services in the city. It is certainly not about reducing or removing services. It is about making them more robust and more sustainable so that they meet future needs as demand increases and becomes more complex, and resourcing becomes tighter.

“Most practices in Aberdeen and across Scotland are managed as independent businesses by GP partners, who contract their primary care services to the NHS. This is the model favoured nationally in the new General Medical Services contract and by the Local Medical Committee and has been the standard model for delivering general practice since the birth of the NHS more than 70 years ago.

“This has nothing to do with ‘privatisation’. Practices will still be very much part of our public sector delivery, receiving public funding for the services they deliver and very much at the heart of our public service ethos.

“Any tender which fails to deliver on this would not be acceptable to the Partnership, to NHS Grampian or the IJB and I hope that people will take this as a cast-iron reassurance from me that our proposals are put forward very much with the interests of our patients and our staff at heart.”

IJB chair Councillor Sarah Duncan said: “The remodelling aims to improve the sustainability of all of our GP practices in the city and ensure they continue to provide excellent person-centred care for patients.

“Patients will not see any immediate large-scale changes at their GP practice but in the longer term, remodelling will create a far more flexible service which can adapt to changing patient needs. It also parallels our work in primary care to provide additional services and create multi-disciplinary teams.

“This will encourage better collaboration and much more cross-system working to ease the pressure on GPs, allowing them to focus on their roles as expert medical generalists. I firmly believe that this will create more equal resourcing across practices, increase their sustainability and significantly enhance the services they can offer their patients.

“The procurement process involving all of the six practices will invite innovative business cases which should stimulate new possibilities for service delivery – and this will open up more collaboration and support between practices, creating greater flexibility for patients and more opportunities for staff.”

Work will now proceed to develop the procurement process in collaboration with practice staff, which will see tenders evaluated against a set of criteria designed to encourage creative new ways of delivering primary care services, to benefit patients and to provide safeguards for staff.

IJB members were assured that vital health services for particularly vulnerable patients would be protected under the procurement criteria. Councillor Duncan said: “No tender would be awarded which would put any practice area or any patient at a disadvantage or subject to inequality.”

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