

May 2022

Lancashire & South Cumbria Pathology Collaboration Update to Overview and Scrutiny

Executive Summary

This report is provided to update members about the work that has been on-going during 21/22 to develop a single pathology service for Lancashire & South Cumbria. This has involved the development of an outline business case to secure funding for the development of a new pathology hub as part of a hub and spoke delivery framework.

In March 2022, the Pathology Collaboration Board took the decision to pause the work that was on-going to form the single service by 1 July 2022. There were several factors driving this which are described in the paper.

At the April Board it was agreed that further engagement should be undertaken with all employees working in pathology. This will serve to invite views on an appropriate leadership structure for the future service, the clinical model and future delivery framework focusing on how the future service will be provided.

The Board also agreed that there are some priority areas that need to be responded to collectively as a system, which are detailed in the paper. All partners committed to working together to address these priorities as a matter of urgency. This work will run in parallel to the engagement described above.

The engagement will run over a three-month period with the outputs being reported back to Board in August. This will inform the development of recommendations to enable the Board to decide the future configuration of pathology services across Lancashire & South Cumbria.

Recommendation

1. To receive the update and note the content of the report
2. To agree timescales for the next update, proposed for Autumn 2022

Recap of Key Programmes of Work Undertaken in 21/22

- Outline business case submitted to NHSE/I in March 2021, proposing a hub and spoke delivery framework. Approval will release £30m capital to fund the Hub and upgrade of Essential Service Laboratories on acute hospital sites
- The design work for the Hub progressed to RIBA stage 2 (concept designs)
- A site was selected for the Hub – Enterprise Zone site in Samlesbury
- Work initiated to form a single pathology service for Lancashire & South Cumbria by 1 July 2022
- A staff consultation launched in November 2021 on the proposal to form a single service and the TUPE transfer all staff in scope over to LTH on 1 July

Background

At the March Board meeting, the decision was taken to pause work that was on-going to form a single pathology service for Lancashire & South Cumbria and progression of the full business case for the hub and spoke delivery model. The staff consultation process concluded at the point that this decision was made.

Key drivers for the pause:

- The staff consultation process highlighted that more listening and engagement needs to be undertaken with all employees in pathology to ensure that all options have been considered. This is particularly with regards to the future delivery framework and development of the clinical model
- The Board also noted that approval of the outline business case by NHS England is still outstanding, and that further clarification is needed about the securing of capital required to develop the future service.

Implications and opportunities arising from the pause:

- Formation of single service is delayed
- Work to progress full business case is on hold for now – EZ site could be lost
- Opportunity to do more robust and meaningful engagement with all employees working in pathology about HOW the service should run in the future
- Opportunity for further clinical engagement on future delivery framework and clinical model – ensuring that all options have been considered

Regardless of the outcome of the OBC approval process, it is recognised that pathology services need to continue to develop collaboratively, therefore other options for investment to develop the future service may need to be explored and considered.

It is significant to highlight that the national direction and push for collaboration is stronger than ever. Therefore, the Board is clear that maintaining the status quo is not an option and all partners remain committed to realising the benefits of coming together, particularly in relation to resilience, quality and improved outcomes for patients.

Current Position

At the April Pathology Collaboration Board meeting, Managing Director, Mark Hindle, presented a paper that provided members with a detailed assessment of pathology services across the system, a reflection of the current position and options to move forwards.

This re-iterated the requirement from the national team for the formation of pathology networks and the case for change.

The paper served to highlight the benefits of collaboration and provided an overview of current issues across pathology services that need addressing collectively as a priority and matter of urgency.

Employee Engagement

The Board supported a proposal in the paper for a renewed process of employee engagement which is independently led and ensures that all voices are heard.

The engagement will invite views on an appropriate leadership structure for the future service, the clinical model and future delivery framework focusing on how the future service will be provided. This will take into consideration wider developments such as community diagnostic centres, new technology and the use of capital allocated to the programme.

It was agreed that a renewed process of staff engagement will run over a three-month period with findings being reported back to the Board in August. The outputs of the engagement work will provide the basis of recommendations to the Board to inform their decision about the future configuration of pathology services across Lancashire & South Cumbria.

System Priorities

All organisations have agreed that they must work together to address the key challenges that exist in the system and take forward any work that will help to address these challenges. This cannot wait and will be progressed as a matter of urgency, running in parallel to the engagement process described above.

These are the priorities:

- Cancer recovery and restoration across the system
- Workforce resilience, focusing on recruitment and the development of extended roles to address shortages of Consultant Histopathologists and Bands 6 and 7
- Implementation of new technology including digital pathology and smart automation
- Reviewing the delivery framework and clinical model

Conclusion

As previously referenced, the Pathology Collaboration Board is committed to realising the benefits of collaboration and nationally there is a clear directive for the formation of pathology networks.

There is agreement at Board level that pathology services cannot continue to run on a standalone basis and that there are a number of benefits that can be achieved through collaboration. The engagement process described in this paper will capture views on; how we deliver the best quality service, improving outcomes for patients, delivering efficiencies and what can be improved through collaboration.

Once the engagement process has been completed it will be reported back to Board in August to inform their decision on the way forward. A clear route map will be developed setting out the short, medium and longer term goals.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report and agree to receive a further update in Autumn 2022 following conclusion of the engagement process and the Board's decision about the configuration of future pathology services for Lancashire & South Cumbria.

Mark Hindle
Managing Director
Lancashire & South Cumbria Pathology Collaboration