

Pathology Tendering Project Scrutiny Committee Brief

31 October 2013

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to brief the scrutiny committee on Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust's (DCHFT) pathology tendering project.

Background

2. In 2008, Lord Carter of Coles undertook a review of Pathology Services in England¹. The review's main objective was to highlight the improvements that could be made to quality and patient safety through service consolidation. "Consolidation provides the means of improving service quality, responsiveness and cost-effectiveness." Considering the longer-term, the review stated that "service consolidation is necessary to transform pathology services so that they can respond swiftly to the challenges presented by innovation (particularly from the genomic revolution)."

3. DCHFT reviewed the provision of pathology services with other trusts across Dorset to determine if a consolidated network could be created to service DCHFT, The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch NHS FT, Poole Hospital NHS FT and Salisbury Hospital NHS FT. However, limited progress was made.

4. In June 2013, the DCHFT trust board agreed to initiate a project to evaluate the current provision of its pathology services against that of other interested parties who may have or be willing to consolidate pathology services.

Current Challenges

5. It is becoming increasingly difficult for DCHFT to meet its pathology quality and safety standards. A recent inspection from the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Authority (MHRA) has identified a number of risks in the provision of blood services. An inspection earlier this year by the Clinical Pathology Accreditation (CPA) also highlighted areas of concerns.

6. There has also been issues recruiting appropriate staff to posts and these reviews highlight the difficulty of running high quality pathology services within a small district general hospital setting.

7. DCH, like others face significant financial challenges. This project provides the opportunity to evaluate if a change in existing pathology services could support financial stability.

Pathology Tendering Project

8. Project Aims

9. The project has two aims:
- Using a tender process, compare our pathology services against other interested providers to determine if DCHFT is providing the best value service.

¹ [Review of Pathology Services in England by Lord Carter of Coles](#)

- Use the outcome of the tender process to inform a decision on the future provision of the service.

10. The tender process will create the framework to ensure DCHFT is able to objectively evaluate it's currently provision of services against other interested parties. The decision of the future provision of pathology services will be made at a DCHFT trust board. One of the options, based on the evaluation could be to retain current services.

11. The evaluation of the best service will based on quality and cost. The quality component is weighted far higher than cost, ensuring that providing a high quality, responsive and safe service to patients is the priority.

12. Project Scope

13. The pathology service can be split broadly into a number of functions:

- Collection of the sample
- Transportation to the laboratory
- Processing
- Medical diagnosis, result interpretation and collaboration with other clinical staff to support patient care.

14. The project scope includes the transportation and processing and some point of care testing. In effect the scope covers most of the background non-patient facing activity. The collection of the sample and medical function is explicitly out of scope.

15. Project Plan

16. The project started formally in October 2013. Given the aims, the main effort will be the tender process. The milestones are:

Prior Information Notice published	23 Oct 13 - complete
Advert published	Dec 13
List of Expression of Interest suppliers created	Jan 14
Pre-Qualifying Questionnaire ends	Feb/Mar 14
Suppliers short-listed	Mar/Apr 14
Tender period completed	May 14
Supplier evaluation completed	Jun – Jul 14
Decision-making complete	Jul – Sep 14

The supplier evaluation timescale will vary depending on how many are shortlisted.

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