



*Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group*

28 October 2013

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Dear Dr Bennett

Following recent conversations, we would like to invite you to help us consider how to strengthen health services in Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire, both now and for the future.

Milton Keynes CCG is committed to close working with our colleagues in Bedfordshire CCG, however, we would emphasise to national partners that there are separate issues to be considered by the two CCGs in taking forward our respective commissioning strategies for the populations served. MK CCG envisions that there will be significant areas of mutual interest and overlap although there are important distinct issues that will require discrete solutions. It will be important for both commissioners and providers to work in a transparent way in order to reach effective solutions and we welcome external support in reaching strategic decisions of such magnitude.

By way of context I would like to add that our local NHS has many strengths and areas of innovation. For example, in Milton Keynes we are introducing clinical pathways that help people receive more care without the need for admission to hospital. In Bedfordshire commissioners are integrating musculoskeletal care and working to enable people with dementia to stay in their own homes for longer.

However, we also face substantial challenges. We have an expanding and increasingly ageing population. Work by Sir Bruce Keogh continues to demonstrate that patients get better outcomes when they have access to specialist care seven days a week. Increasing the numbers of staff on duty will increase pressures on our already stretched budgets unless we find different ways of delivering some of these essential health care services.

Further, the hospitals that currently serve our populations have experienced both clinical and financial problems over recent years. In line with the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act, our Clinical Commissioning Groups and local GP members we represent, need to ensure that our population has access to services that are of high quality, affordable and balance local access with sustainability. Recent emergency changes to some local services has highlighted the need for this to be tackled with greater pace if we are to avoid further enforced service change.

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Together for the health of MK

In doing so, we will put the needs of current and future service users first. We intend to begin this work by engaging with our communities to better understand their needs and aspirations. If formal changes are being considered, we will of course consult again with our local communities ahead of making any decisions.

We will build on the clinical engagement that accompanied the drafting of our commissioning strategies and other, earlier, work. In particular we will rely on the clinical insight and assistance of Martin Wetherill (Medical Director) and Lisa Knight (Chief Nurse and Director of Patient Care) from Milton Keynes Hospital Foundation Trust, and the Medical and Nursing Directors at Bedford Hospital NHS Trust.

You have indicated that you are willing to appoint a team to facilitate our process to plan for the future and work with us, which we appreciate. This is particularly welcome given the restricted running costs that CCGs must operate within which means that we are very limited in our ability to resource additional management capacity to deliver this strategy. However, as a governing body we are fully committed to offering our commitment and leadership to delivering a successful outcome for this project. Both Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire are amongst the lowest funded CCGs in the country. In view of this we would ask that a creative solution is found, within the identified financial resources, to support local clinicians within the CCG to engage with the process and to drive it forward. We intend to share this letter with local clinicians who want to be involved in the process as it develops and the ability to fund their involvement would encourage participation.

While we cannot be certain of the outcome of our work, we are sure we will arrive at a set of future services that can give the people of Bedford and Milton Keynes an NHS of which they can be proud.

In the meantime we continue to work closely with Milton Keynes Hospital Foundation Trust, Bedford Hospital NHS Trust, Luton and Dunstable Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Kettering General Hospital Foundation Trust, Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust, South Essex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, Addenbrooke's Hospital and Stoke Mandeville Hospital in light of the critical role they play in supporting the health of our local patients.

In conclusion may I thank you for your offer of support and confirm that Milton Keynes CCG would welcome the opportunity to develop a set of principles which structure a programme of work that delivers an ambitious solution for the two populations served.

Yours sincerely



**Jeannie Ablett**  
Chief Officer



**Dr Nicola Smith**  
Chair

cc: Sir David Nicholson  
Mr David Flory

