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PRESS RELEASE

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Doctors and health care leaders today announced a new development in the options for future hospital services in mid and south Essex.

In recent months, two main options for change have been discussed with patients, staff and stakeholders. Both options would have seen significant changes to the way the three A&E departments at Broomfield, Basildon and Southend hospitals operate.

Having studied the available evidence and listened carefully to the views of local people, patients and stakeholders, clinicians and health leaders have now decided to develop a revised model that would enable all three current A&E departments to continue to treat people who need emergency hospital care, including continuing to receive 'blue light' emergency patients with serious conditions. It would rule out the blanket redirection of all 'blue light' ambulances to Basildon, as in previous options.

Under this plan, patients would be assessed, stabilised and treated in their local hospital, with the most unwell patients transferred to a specialist team, if that's what they need. The 'norm' would be for people to go to their local hospital in an emergency. As before, all three A&E departments would continue to be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and run by consultants.

As now, a small number of people who are very seriously ill would go straight to a specialist centre to get the best treatment (for example, people suffering severe burns already go to Broomfield in Chelmsford).

Senior doctors are currently looking in detail at the clinical evidence to see if there are other severe conditions that may require this approach – for example for people suffering from burst blood vessels in the brain or heart, or people with very severe abdominal bleeding requiring urgent emergency surgery. This work is not yet complete but doctors are focusing on it over the next few months.

Clare Panniker, Chief Executive of Basildon, Broomfield and Southend Hospitals, explained:

"We have been looking at how we could organise services across our three main hospital sites, working together and using our people and resources as effectively as possible for the

greatest benefit for patients. One of the improvements we want to make is to separate out emergency care from planned operations and treatments needing an overnight stay, to reduce the number of times we have to cancel planned operations. We know when this happens it is frustrating and difficult for those patients and their families. We also want our three hospitals to work together, offering different specialist services at each of our sites. We know specialising in this way for those with the most serious conditions and illnesses gives better chances of recovery to our patients.

“In considering our options, we have discussed with staff and local people the benefits of one hospital, possibly Basildon, providing the most serious emergency treatment. But, in the feedback from over 100 local discussion events, we have heard very clearly that some people have significant concerns about all ‘blue light’ ambulances going straight to Basildon. We have been thinking how we could address these concerns, and still improve patient care with different specialist teams across our three hospital sites and the separation of planned and emergency care.”

Dr Anita Donley OBE, Independent Chair of the Mid and South Essex Success Regime, said:

“The aim still stands to develop specialist centres across our three hospital sites and to separate planned operations and treatments from emergency care. We know from national evidence that this can improve the quality of care and patients’ chances of survival - particularly with very serious cases. But we are working with our clinicians and local people to make sure we develop the right proposals for mid and south Essex. We are developing an option where the majority of patients could get the specialist emergency care they need via their local A&E.

“No decision on the future pattern of services has yet been taken. We will only decide what changes to make after a full public consultation.

“We are determined to find the very best solution for delivering excellent, safe, high quality hospital care, within our available funding, into the long-term for people in mid and south Essex.”

ENDS

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