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News from the Black Country and West Birmingham Integrated Care System Partnership

Healthier Futures
Black Country and West Birmingham

Partnership News

ISSUE 01
November 2020

Welcome

Welcome to our first Healthier Futures Partnership Newsletter, this is aimed at our partners and key stakeholders to ensure that you are aware of the progress we are making in the Black Country and West Birmingham to work together and improve the health and wellbeing of local people.

Our health and care partnership...



Around 1.5 million people

We will work closely with partners from neighbouring STPs (e.g. Birmingham and Solihull STP).

212 GP Practices

31 Primary Care Networks

18 Partners

- 4 Clinical Commissioning Groups
- 5 Local Authorities
- 1 Mental Health Trust
- 1 Integrated Care Provider
- 4 Hospitals
- 1 Community Trust
- 1 Ambulance Service
- 1 NHS Midlands

Our shared vision...

Working together to improve the health and wellbeing of local people.



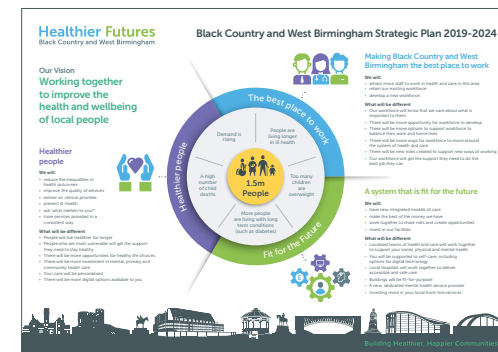
5 Localities: Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, West Birmingham and Wolverhampton

Our partnership of health and care organisations serves 1.5 million local people across the Black Country and West Birmingham. Our population has some shared health challenges that we can only tackle effectively by working together, which we have been doing now for several years. The creation of a Black Country and West Birmingham Integrated Care System, to collectively plan and integrate care to meet the needs of local people is key. At the time of writing this news we are awaiting feedback on when this arrangement will be formalised.

As a partnership we will work to three clear ambitions over the next five years.

- To improve the health of local people
- To create a system that is fit for the future
- To support our staff and be seen as the best place to work.

These are summarised in our [strategic plan](#) and throughout this newsletter you will see the steps we are already taking to achieve these ambitions.



Whilst work progresses to secure the long term health of the people we serve, all of our partner organisations continue to deliver the very best response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since Wave 1 earlier this year our efforts to ensure that people continue to have access to non COVID-19 services has intensified as our teams worked hard over the summer months to safely diagnose and treat those people whose treatments were deferred. It is these collaborative efforts across our system which have proved invaluable in ensuring that we have been prepared and able to respond to the challenges which this terrible virus has presented us with.

[Continue reading >](#)



Building Healthier, Happier Communities

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This preparedness and indeed the response we have already seen to date is testament to the strong leadership, dedicated workforce and robust relationships that we have here in the Black Country and West Birmingham. We would like to pay thanks to all of the key workers and volunteers who have helped protect those most vulnerable during this pandemic and to thank local people for your continued support for these key workers, and for your own sacrifices in complying with the restrictions we have all faced.

As we now face the winter months our teams continue to respond well, and whilst the whole system is under pressure we are determined to continue to be there for people when they need us. We reach out to local partners to thank you for your work to support people and ask that our communities do what they can to look after themselves and each other during this winter period. Kindness during these tough times is really important. The services provided by our partner organisations are there for local people, but the benefits provided by the everyday supportive and caring actions of the people and communities across the Black Country and West Birmingham are immeasurable in the impact they have each day for local people.

Our newsletter will be published bimonthly after our Partnership Board. You can find copies on our [website](#) along with other information on our collaborative work.

Take care.



Johnathan Fellows
Independent Chair



Paul Maubach
Chief Executive, BCWB CCGs

Community mental health transformation

In line with the NHS long term plan and learning from patients, carers, stakeholders and experiences through COVID-19, Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust are embarking on an ambitious plan to transform core community mental health services for adults and older adults. This ambition will deliver a core community offer that is tailored, where needed, to each locality.

The ethos behind the approach will be:

- Collaborating with all stakeholders so that co-production sits at the heart of the programme
- Partnership working and exploring new roles / models where it best meets the needs of the services
- Innovation, learning from new ways of working and best practise
- A radical shift in service delivery

The stakeholder engagement and co-production sub-groups are currently developing plans to involve and engage with audiences. This will also fit in with the trust's clinical strategy development so all plans are aligned.

Stakeholders will have a part to play in this, so look out for more information about how you can help shape and support the transformation plans.

In the meantime if you have any questions please contact Head of Communications and Engagement, michelle.carr8@nhs.net

Staff in BCWB humbled to be a part of Queen's Birthday Honours list

Members of staff from across the Black Country and West Birmingham joined the Queen's Birthday Honours list this October.

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Beverly Morris, Head of Continuing Health Care (CHC), Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG

Bev scooped the prestigious British Empire Medal for her fantastic leadership and care to patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 59-year-old, who lives in Birmingham, works across many independent care home providers and with local statutory services.

She has an excellent reputation for delivering patient centred care and has been recognised for supporting the proactive swabbing of care home residents and supporting care homes in crisis. A record 100% of infection and prevention care home education support was also achieved.

Bev's focus has always been to manage a range of complex patients, sometimes in very difficult situations and across organisational boundaries, yet she has led her team with knowledge, humility and often going the extra mile.

Bev said:

"I am honoured to have been nominated and feel very privileged to receive this British Empire Medal. It feels very surreal - I was doing my job like so many other amazing people in NHS during these unprecedented times."

"I accept this medal on behalf of my manager and an absolutely amazing team, without them our achievements would not have been possible."



Molly Henriques-Dillon, Quality Nurse Team Leader, Wolverhampton CCG

Molly was awarded the British Empire Medal for fantastic leadership and care to patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Molly came out of retirement to lead a quality nurse team for the Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG).

The 62-year-old from Penkridge has helped oversee arrangements for 60 care homes across Wolverhampton.

She is known to be pragmatic, calm, patient focused and solutions-oriented. Care home managers remarked how impressed they were with her friendly and helpful attitude during the pandemic.

Molly said:

"I was astonished to hear that I was receiving this prestigious award. It is my honour and delight to accept the British Empire Medal not just for myself but also for the incredible people I work with in the CCG, the City Council, community teams and the care home managers; we pulled together to save lives and protect some of the most vulnerable people in our society."

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Sally Roberts, Chief Nursing Officer for Black Country and West Birmingham CCGs, said:

"I'm delighted that our lead nurses offer solutions and a positive approach in any situation, no matter how difficult. They are willing to learn, open minded, respected and great colleagues who are held in very high esteem. They are an asset to our team, colleagues and patients."

Dr Ian Sykes, Chair of Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG, said:

"Bev and Molly are fantastic role models and highly deserving of this prestigious award. They join other Black Country colleagues on the Queen's Honours list this year – we are also so proud of Dr Sarbjit Clare and Gaynor Evans who received an MBE and OBE respectively."



Dr Sarb Clare

Dr Sarb Clare is responsible for setting up the acute medicine department at City Hospital in Birmingham, where some of the sickest patients are treated; she has been awarded an MBE for her dedication to the profession.

As a frontline doctor she has treated hundreds of coronavirus patients. The medic, aged 44, who has also been involved in a number of projects which not only improve patient care but also address the wellbeing of her colleagues, said:

"I am incredibly delighted and honoured to receive an MBE."

"It is a privilege for me to serve the local community who face huge health inequality and very humbling for my work to be recognised in this manner. It's even more poignant in a year which has been turned upside down due to the coronavirus pandemic."

"Receiving this award means a lot to me as it recognises what we often do not see under the tip of the iceberg of success which is grit, energy, time, disappointment, dedication, sacrifice and much more. I applaud all my team who are critical to this success especially my amazing nursing team who are the true heroes."

As well as being a frontline doctor, Dr Clare is also the Deputy Medical Director and a key clinician who is leading the teams into the new Midland Metropolitan Hospital, which is currently under construction.

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Whilst overall we are seeing an increase in life expectancy for people in the Black Country and West Birmingham, we are seeing a decrease in the healthy life expectancy, which means for many people they are living longer in ill health. This not only creates a burden on individuals and their quality of life, but it also impacts the health and care system.

Therefore, to enable NHS and Local Authorities in the Black Country and West Birmingham to respond to the changing health needs of their population, an Academy is being introduced. The newly formed Academy will play a key role in understanding population health challenges and will use data insights to inform solutions to the challenges people face across the Black Country and West Birmingham. This approach is known as population health management.

Population health management is an approach that aims to improve physical and mental health outcomes, promote wellbeing and reduce health inequalities across an entire population. This includes focusing on the wider determinants of health, the places and communities we live in and with, and our health behaviours and lifestyles. These all have a significant impact, as only 20% of a person's health outcomes are attributed to the ability to access good quality health care.

Locally, the Academy will help organisations to:

- build a shared knowledge and understanding of the Black Country and West Birmingham population and of the solutions for achieving better outcomes for local people
- provide and promote standardised approaches to evaluation, learning and system improvement, supporting a reduction in unwarranted variation and sharing best practice
- provide a mechanism for coordinating cross-system training and development initiatives and facilitate the development of a single workforce strategy
- enable the health and care system to coordinate improvement activities (including those promoted by national/regional bodies), ensuring they are sustainable and secure the optimal benefits.

The NHS Long Term Plan places a heavy emphasis on prevention and early diagnosis, along with the integration of health and care services, where community services, public health, social care, voluntary sector, police, fire service, GPs and hospitals are all working better together.

What does this mean for local people?

For local people, this means that health and care services are being more proactive in helping people to manage their health and wellbeing, providing more personalised care when it's needed and ensuring that local services are working together to offer a wider range of support closer to people's homes.

Examples of how population insights will be used across the Black Country and West Birmingham:

- Identifying people who are more likely to receive a late diagnosis for cancer and working with them to explore what we could do differently to encourage earlier diagnosis.
- Exploring patient preferences for people with advanced serious illness and ways that these can be met.
- Exploring whether access to diabetes care and achievement of positive diabetes outcomes is equal across different groups in the Black Country and West Birmingham and what we could do differently to support more proactive care in those where outcomes could be improved.
- Identifying and developing people who work in the NHS and local authorities with the skills needed to answer these questions.



To contact the Academy please email Academy Director

Lucy Heath

lucy.heath2@nhs.net

07826 884797

Learning Disability and Autism Services Strengthened

The people working across health to support those with learning disabilities and autism are changing the way they work.

On 1 October, learning disability commissioners, case managers and programme management staff transferred to Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, working towards a new operating model for learning disability and autism services across the Black Country.

Positive collaboration between the CCGs and the Trust has already resulted in different and innovative ways of working, bringing many benefits for people with learning disabilities and/or autism.

Improved pathways, enhanced coordination of care and strengthened joint working across the system are just some of the benefits of this move, which has seen a small number of commissioning staff move to the Trust to sit alongside those providing the service.

Mark Axcell, Chief Executive of Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, commented:

"I am delighted to welcome colleagues who have recently joined us supporting our work to transform care for people with learning disabilities and/or autism. This important move takes us one step closer to developing a more collaborative model for mental health, learning disability and autism services across the region. More importantly, it will enable us to continue improving people's experiences and ensure that care is focused on keeping individuals healthy, well and supported in their local community."

Jonathan Fellows, Independent Chair, Black Country and West Birmingham STP, said:

"Increasing collaboration and ensuring that those working across our system are focussed on the needs of the people we serve, is a priority for us. By removing organisational boundaries and forming a single team we are confident that we will be best placed to deliver better support for those living with learning disabilities and autism."

Pauline's story

Across the Black Country and West Birmingham, our Transforming Care Programme (TCP) is the main vehicle for improving services for people with learning disabilities and/or autism. The programme has successfully reduced the number of people with learning disabilities and/or autism residing in hospital so that more people can live in the community, with the right support, close to their home. Developments also include the introduction of a new intensive support service and a review of assessment and treatment beds with an emphasis on supporting people to live well in the community. Ultimately, we aim to support people like Pauline so they can lead fulfilled, healthy lives, supported to access reasonably adjusted care and support when they need it, which focuses on their strengths and achieving their expressed outcomes.

After spending most of her adult life in hospital, Pauline is now supported to live in a home of her own. This is her [story](#)...

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People Plan

The Healthier Futures partnership has published our People Plan. This plan sets out what our NHS people can expect from local leaders and from each other. The arrival of COVID-19 has highlighted the enormous contribution all our NHS people make each and every day, and now more than ever we must keep people at the heart of all we do.

The plan hopes to build on the creativity and drive shown by our NHS people in their response, to date, to the COVID-19 pandemic. It focuses on how we must all continue to look after each other and foster a culture of inclusion and belonging, as well as take action to grow our workforce, lead them well, train our people, and work together differently to deliver patient care.

The Healthier Futures People Plan has been produced rejecting traditional 'assume and plan' approaches – and recognising complexity and uncertainty, BCWB Local Workforce Action Board (LWAB) took an innovative 'Futures Planning' approach to inform the strategy.

Alan Duffell, workforce lead for the partnership said:

"This is an exciting time of transition for the Black Country and West Birmingham system as it moves closer to forming an Integrated Care System (ICS). Our people have worked harder than ever this year to serve local people and protect those most vulnerable. This people plan sets out our commitment to supporting all of these great people to make the job they love doing as rewarding as possible and to make the Black Country and West Birmingham the best place to work!"

The full People Plan is available on our [website](#) and the plan on a page can be seen below.

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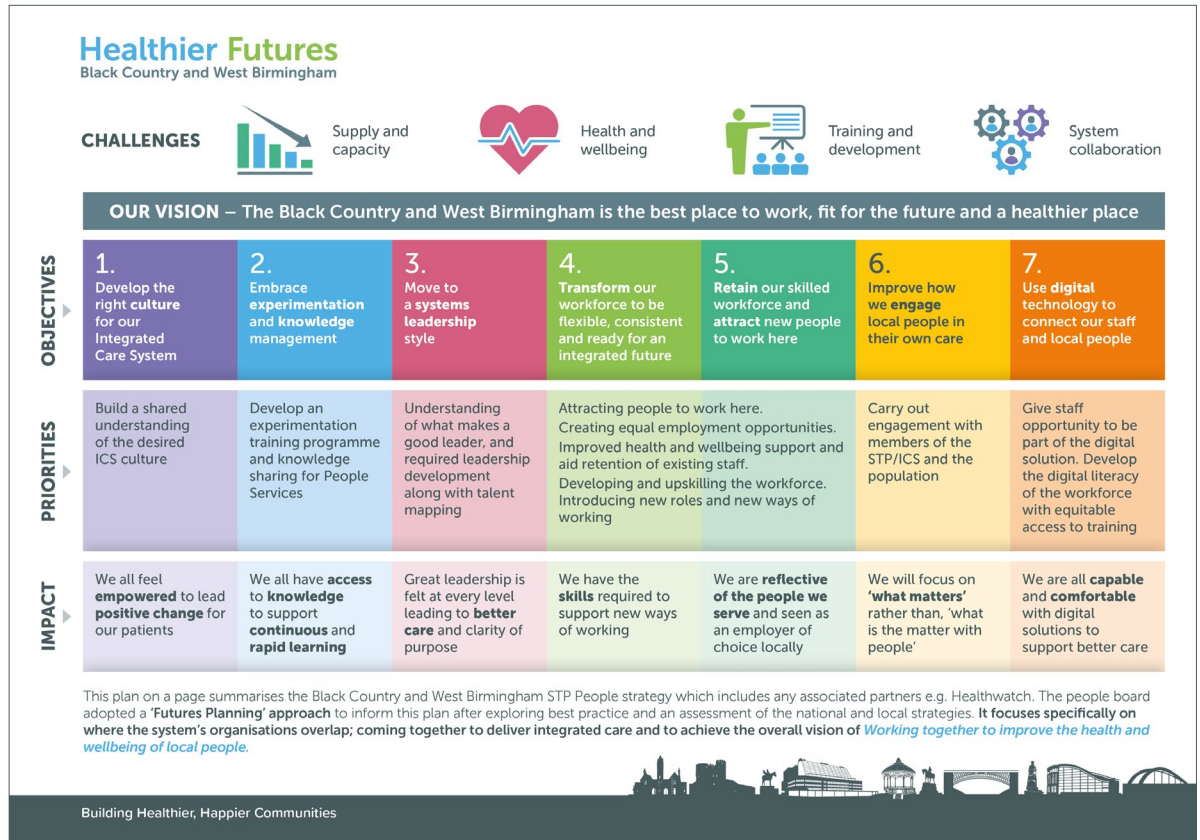
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The Black Country and West Birmingham Academy has initiated the Wider Determinants of Healthy Life Expectancy (WHoLE) Programme. The purpose of the programme is to help local partner organisations:

- better understand their local populations in terms of the interactions between the wider context of their lives and their health
- develop a set of priorities for action
- engage relevant stakeholder and community groups
- co-design, and collaboratively implement and evaluate, projects relating to the social, economic and environmental circumstances in which people live to facilitate improved population health.

A discussion document full of local experiences, international evidence and bespoke high-level analysis is now being used to engage community groups and partner organisations, and to generate debate and decisions about what an increased local focus on improving population health and wellbeing in the Black Country and West Birmingham (BCWB) should look like.

Lucy Heath, Director for the Academy, said:

"Good health matters to individuals and to society, but we don't all have the same opportunities to live healthy lives. To understand why, we need to look at the bigger picture: the circumstances in which we are born, grow, live, work and age. These include our surroundings, the food we eat, the money we have, the quality of our education and our work, the homes we live in and the family, friends and communities we have around us. These factors have the strongest influence on our health and wellbeing and are often outside of our control. We need to think differently and act across society on these social determinants of health. This report starts to explore these issues. We are sharing it with community and partnership groups and asking for ideas about how we could act differently."

Black Country & West Birmingham CCG Merger

Governing Body members for four Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Groups supported plans to merge the CCGs to become one.

Last month at the Governing Bodies in Common meeting for the four Black Country and West Birmingham (BCWB) CCGs – Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell & West Birmingham and Wolverhampton – members voted to proceed with a formal application to NHS England and Improvement to merge in April 2021.

The four CCGs have now received approval (with conditions) to proceed with the merger plans from NHS England and Improvement, to become one CCG in April 2021.

Paul Maubach, Chief Executive, Black Country and West Birmingham CCGs, said:

"I'm really pleased that we can continue to work together but in a more cohesive way and, in doing so, we can secure the best health care for our population across the Black Country and West Birmingham."

Earlier this month, the GP Members from all four CCGs participated in an independent vote conducted by Civica Election Services. The vote followed nearly a year of engagement with GP Members, staff, stakeholders and the public exploring how the four CCGs could potentially work more efficiently and effectively across the healthcare system if they worked as one, with five clearly defined places within.

Across all four CCGs there was significant engagement in the vote, with 98% of BCWB practices voting and 90% of those who voted agreeing with the proposal to merge.

The outcome of this vote, along with the information from the stakeholder engagement, was discussed at the Governing Bodies in Common meeting to inform their decision as to whether to proceed with a merger application.

To read the CCG conversation document on these plans and the full engagement report visit one of the CCG websites.

Celebrating Black Country Pathology Services

This November we celebrated National Pathology Week, which took place 2-8 November 2020, as an opportunity to highlight the important contribution pathologists make to healthcare.

The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust hosts the Black Country Pathology Services (BCPS) with its central hub based at New Cross Hospital and essential service laboratories at The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust and Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust. BCPS serves these Trusts as well as a wider area providing services for local GPs, national specialist testing and working as part of national research studies.

The centre is a beacon for the collaborative approach that we aim to follow for other services across our partnership. The formation of BCPS is part of a major NHS initiative where pathology services are being reorganised into much larger local pathology network models, in order to deliver the fastest and highest quality of care for patients.

David Loughton, Chief Executive for RWT, said:

"Pathology services are an essential part of hospital, community and GP services across every step of a patient's journey. From screening, through to diagnosis, treatment and follow up surveillance, all using some of the most technologically advanced science and equipment."

"The COVID-19 pandemic has, and continues to, put considerable pressure on our pathology teams working across the Black Country pathology sites, especially our colleagues in Microbiology who have been tasked with undertaking testing for the virus, alongside the Antibody Testing Service, on top of their usual duties."

"The teams have had to set up brand new

tests, using new technology and new equipment which have never been used before – all in an effort to provide larger numbers of tests. Throughout the spring, summer and autumn months they have been working to bring in new technology that can provide fast and reliable results."

"The whole BCPS service has put in long hours to ensure that we are able to continue quick and accurate testing of our patients, both COVID and otherwise, in the Black Country and beyond."

"This has been an example of fantastic teamwork, and the executive team and I thank staff for their continued hard work at this challenging time."

Medical Director for the Partnership, Dr Jonathan Odum:

"I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff in the Black Country Pathology Services (BCPS) for their ongoing commitment and dedication to their work. BCPS has diverse teams of varying disciplines and these unsung heroes have worked extraordinarily hard, particularly in the light of COVID-19, to keep our patients safe and continue to improve the rate and quality of testing as we move through the pandemic."

The BCPS was launched in October 2018 when medical and laboratory staff transferred to RWT as the host trust. The service serves a population of approximately 1.8m people and carries out over 60m tests per year.

[Hear from Dr Harrison](#) on why he thinks it's a success.

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There are **697 members of staff** in the Black Country Pathology Service (BCPS).



The microbiology team process over **1,400 COVID-19 PCR swab tests a day**, seven days a week.



Since May 2020, the BCPS has processed over **132,000 COVID-19 PCR swab tests** for patients and NHS staff.



Between 29 May-31 October 2020, approximately **75,269 samples** have been processed within the blood sciences department as part of **COVID-19 antibody testing** - this includes healthcare staff across the four Trust sites:



In addition to hospital staff, testing has been performed for:

- staff and patients in primary care
- care home staff and residents
- emergency services – police, ambulance and fire service
- local education

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Talk Before You Walk to A & E

A new service which aims to reduce overcrowding and risk of transmitting COVID-19 in hospital emergency departments (ED) will be rolled out across the Black Country and West Birmingham.

The NHS 111 first service will offer a booked time slot in emergency departments to patients with an urgent – but not serious or life-threatening – illness or injury.

From 30 November, patients who are thinking about going to an emergency department (also known as A&E) are being asked to contact NHS 111 first instead of just turning up at hospital. Following a clinical assessment, where appropriate they will be offered a booked time slot to attend their local emergency department, or they may be directed to a more appropriate local service, which could be an urgent treatment centre, GP practice or pharmacy.

This approach is being introduced nationally to improve outcomes and aims to help manage capacity in our emergency departments, and reduce the risk of spreading of COVID-19, flu and other infections. For patients, it will ensure they get quicker, safer care in the right environment for their needs.

Anyone who attends the emergency department without calling 111 first will not be turned away, but they may need to wait longer in the department with patients prioritised according to their clinical need.

Richard Beeken, Urgent and Emergency Care Lead for the BCWB System:

“Expansion of NHS 111 will help to ensure that people are seen safely in the right place.

“We are working hard to ensure people continue to get the care and treatment they need, but with COVID-19 cases once again on the rise, we are keen to prevent overcrowding in our healthcare settings.

“By asking people to contact NHS 111 first and advising them where and when to go, we can more safely manage waiting areas, reducing the potential for crowding and thus significantly lowering the risk of COVID-19 transmission.”

Dr Pir Shah, NHSE/I Urgent and Emergency Care Clinical Advisor for the West Midlands, said:

“It is important to stress that people will not be turned away if they go straight to the emergency department as before. However those that do may end up waiting longer.

“Our NHS 111 service is best placed to talk to people, understand their health concern and ensure that they are seen in the right place at the right time. We are urging people to contact NHS 111 first when they need urgent care. If a visit to ED is required then a booked timeslot will be arranged. This will help to ensure safety and reduce waiting times for all patients.

“Being able to provide patients who need emergency department care with a specific timeslot to attend is a great expansion on the service already provided by NHS 111, and is one which will help to keep people safe and well through the winter months.”

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Dudley Integrated Health and Care (DIHC) NHS Trust and the development of the Integrated Care Provider in Dudley has reached its second key milestone.

New staff and services have joined the organisation and it has submitted its business case for the award of the integrated care provider contract for Dudley.

The new services are:

- NHS Continuing Healthcare and Intermediate Care assessment
- Pharmaceutical Public Health
- Primary medical services for patients registered with the High Oak practice
- Primary Care Local Health Improvement Schemes
- Other corporate activities previously carried out by Dudley CCG.

These new services join:

- Dudley Talking Therapy Service
- Primary Care Mental Health Service
- The Pensnett Respiratory Assessment Centre.



Welcoming the new services, DIHC Chair Harry Turner said:

"This is an exciting time for Dudley. We have a real chance to improve the health of our local population by building services around them. We have GPs and primary care at our heart and our ethos is to wrap care around the people of Dudley. Our organisation will ensure that Dudley people receive their healthcare in the community where possible and in hospital where necessary."

Black Country and West Birmingham CCGs Chief Executive, Paul Maubach, said:

"Our shared agenda is to ensure that we are developing truly integrated services for local people. This move sees us take an important step towards the full implementation of DIHC's Integrated Care Provider contract which will focus on improving the health and wellbeing of Dudley people."

The business case has been submitted to NHSE/I for approval. The approval process is expected to take up to six months with the Integrated Care Provider Contract being awarded on 1 April 2021. If successful regulatory approval is given the new organisation will run a contract worth £2.4 billion over the course of 10 years.

More information about Dudley Integrated Health and Care NHS Trust can be found at www.dihc.nhs.uk or you can watch their [animated video](#) to explain more.



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Academy to focus on population health across the Black Country and West Birmingham

Learning Disability and Autism Services Strengthened

People Plan

Working Together for a Healthier Post-COVID Future

Black Country & West Birmingham CCG Merger

Celebrating Black Country Pathology Services

Talk Before You Walk to A & E

Key Milestone for Dudley Integrated Health and Care NHS Trust

Just the 1.4 Million Calls!

Ease the Load

Join our Citizens Panel



It has been a year since West Midlands Ambulance Service took over the NHS111 service and answered their first call. 1.4 million calls later, staff are celebrating an incredibly successful first year.

The Trust provides the service across the West Midlands (excluding Staffordshire) from a call centre in Brierley Hill.

No-one could have foreseen the year that has just happened: as well as the many improvements implemented, the effect COVID-19 has had on 111 has been immense. The challenges and successes were heavily featured on the Channel 4 programme, Paramedics: Britain's Lifesavers, back in the summer.

Head of 111, Rob Till, said:

"We initially played a crucial role in arranging test appointments and providing results before testing was moved online. More recently, we have become a gateway to many other NHS services such as urgent treatment centres and for GP appointments and that will continue over the coming months."

"In the last 12 months we have recruited 739 new call handlers and clinicians. This means we are always one of the top providers for answering calls quickly. We also now have GPs, advanced nurses and paramedics, dental nurses, mental health nurses and pharmacists giving specialist advice to patients, 24 hours day."

"Having such a dedicated team meant we were able to maintain a great service to patients throughout the challenging COVID peak and continue to assist other 111 areas with their calls when necessary."

"Our staff have done an amazing job and we are in a really strong position ahead of the most challenging winter the NHS has ever faced."

Paul Maubach, Chief Executive of the Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Groups, who commission the 111 service, said:

"I want to thank the staff who work within 111 for the exceptional efforts they have put into running this service during one of the most challenging periods the NHS has ever seen. The fact that you have been able to answer so many calls, help patients and provide a great service is testament to your hard work."

"111 has proved itself to be a vital part of the NHS and with the developments that are coming over the next 12 months I am in no doubt that you will continue to provide a great service for patients and continue to be a crucial part of the NHS."

WMAS Integrated Emergency and Urgent Care Director, Jeremy Brown, added: *"I am always very proud when our commissioners remark on what a great service the staff are providing. When you consider the level of recruitment and our response to COVID-19, they really have been exemplary."*

"The future also looks exciting with the full integration of the 999 and 111 services which will benefit staff and patients. We are already seeing an increase in the number of ambulance crews accessing the specialist advice available from the advanced clinicians in the 111 call centre, which is helping to reduce the number of patients being taken to A&E. We also expect to see the further development of video triaging, which is already benefitting patients. The next year looks just as exciting as the first."

Trust Chief Executive, Anthony Marsh, commented:

"This has been a real success story despite the extraordinary challenges that the 111 service has faced. With the developments coming, we will create an even better service. Congratulations to everyone in 111."

Ease the Load

Black Country Healthcare encourage staff and patients across the Black Country to “ease the load” and seek support with their mental health.

The stigma associated with mental health prevents 40% of people from seeking help. Recognising this as a significant issue, particularly during the Covid 19 pandemic, on World Mental Health Day (Saturday 10 October) Black Country Healthcare launched ‘Ease the Load.’

The campaign tells the story of three different people (a young mum, a business man and an older man) in everyday situations where they should be happy, but yet they feel they are being weighed down by their problems.

The messaging introduces early signs of common mental health problems such as sleeplessness or change in mood or appetite, and encourages people to seek help sooner rather than later, pointing them towards a dedicated [website](#) where they can find help in the form of IAPT services.

The campaign launched with a powerful video and has been supported by social media, YouTube and Google adverts and has already made an impact on referrals into the service, with 1,422 people taking action via the website to seek support. On average, referrals have increased by over 38% when compared to before the start of the pandemic.

Chief Executive Mark Axcell commented:

“The fact that one in four people experience a common mental health issue each year in England, coupled with the fact that 40% of people don’t seek help because of the stigma attached to having a mental health issue means that campaigns such as ‘Ease the Load’ are vitally important in encouraging people to seek help and I am really pleased that stats show the campaign is making a difference.

“We are living in unprecedented times and I would encourage anyone to come forward and seek help if they feel they need it.

“As an organisation, we are also proud to be providing mental health support to NHS staff within the Black Country and West Birmingham STP. They have been on the frontline of a global pandemic for nearly nine months now – and it is vital that we look after their mental wellbeing, to ensure they can be at their best to provide the care that so many people are reliant on.”

Support for NHS staff during the ongoing pandemic

SilverCloud is an online platform which you can join and undertake a programme of cognitive therapy behaviour (CBT) which is designed to help you manage things such as stress, anxiety or sleep problems. You can choose your own programme, based on your needs, and you complete the course in your own time and at your own pace.

You will be assigned an online therapist who will guide you through the programme – although you can choose to go it alone if you would prefer.

To sign up to SilverCloud please visit the following links:

If you are registered with a GP in Dudley:

<https://dudleytalkingtherapy.silvercloudhealth.com/>

If you are registered with a GP in Walsall:

<https://walsalltalkingtherapy.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/>

If you don't have a GP in either of the above areas:

<https://nhs.silvercloudhealth.com/signup/>

Access code is: NHS2020

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As part of the 'Healthier Futures' partnership, we have set up 'Black Country Voices' – an online citizens' panel to give local people greater say. The panel has more than 1,650 members who represent people who live, work and use health and care services across the Black Country and West Birmingham. They will take part in online surveys, sharing their views and feedback about planning and improving local health and care services.

Their views will be shared with health and care decision makers to help improve services. We will give panel members regular feedback on the results of surveys they participate in and how their views are being used to influence developments.

Becoming a member

Black Country Voices is a voluntary membership scheme for people who are interested in sharing their views and experiences to help to develop and improve local services. Although some panel members were recruited to represent local populations and demographics, anyone can become a member. If you would like to join Black Country Voices click [here](#).

If you would like more information about Black Country Voices, email blackcountryvoices@nhs.net

Recent surveys

The Black Country Voices team collaborated with workstream leads and have delivered three surveys. Feedback has been provided to decision makers help to improve local services. As part of the wider strategy development for the digital workstream, in March the 'Digital tools in health and social care' ran for three weeks with the aim of gathering insight around how digital services in the NHS were being or could be used. Feedback from the survey was used as additional insight to inform the digital strategy.

The coronavirus pandemic changed our lives considerably and way in which health and care services are being accessed has also changed. In June, as part of the Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Groups' (CCGs) ongoing work to respond to the pandemic, the COVID-19 Patient Experience Survey was developed and shared with the panel to gather their views and experiences on accessing health services locally during the pandemic.

Recently, the panel worked with the Strategy Unit as part of the Healthier Futures Partnership to understand more about how the wider circumstances of local people's lives affects their physical and mental health. Results from this survey informed a report with the aim to help local organisations work together on improving aspects which affect our health.



Interesting links:

https://www.wmahsn.org/news/2020/11/09/NHS_Social_Care_Digital_Programme

https://www.wmahsn.org/news/2020/11/11/New_drive_to_intervene_earlier_to_help_young_people_in_the_West_Midlands_suffering_from_chronic_eating_disorders