

8th June 2012

Darlington Darzi Practice Service Review Consultation, engagement and communications proposal

Background

The North East Primary Care Services Agency (NEPCSA) is undertaking a service review on behalf of NHS County Durham and Darlington.

The North East Primary Care Services Agency (NEPCSA) manage the primary care contracts across the North East and will lead the review of the service providing NHS County Durham and Darlington with a report and recommendation for the future of the service. The review will end on 31st July 2012.

The Darlington Darzi Practice is a practice which is currently managed by County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust under a two-year APMS contract. The service was originally transferred to CDDFT under the Transforming Community Services (TCS) project and has both a registered practice list and a number of unregistered patients. The contract is due to end on 31st March 2013.

In April 2011 the service was transferred as an “out of Scope” contract as part of Transforming Community Services and detailed as such in a business transfer agreement signed with CDDFT.

All community health service staff and services were transferred to County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, the preferred management partner who host the operational management of County Durham and Darlington Community Health Services (CDDCHS). NHS County Durham and Darlington decided that the Darlington Darzi practice was within the core set of services to be transferred to the Foundation Trust, as its services could continue to be provided in another way that would give value for money and deliver the same level of service.

The review is necessary due to the contract coming to an end on the 31 March 2013. The review will define the future of the provision of services by the Darzi practice when the contract expires.

The service review being undertaken is that of the Darlington Darzi Practice. This practice has a registered list of 775 patients and also has an unregistered element whereby patients can attend for treatment without registering with the practice. An average of approximately 1,250 unregistered patients was seen each month during 2011/12.

As the contract is due to terminate on 31st March 2013, a decision needs to be made with regards to the future of this service. A review has therefore been authorised by NHS County Durham and Darlington with a view to determine its future.

The service review is investigating the existing service and will also look at the advantages and disadvantages of potential commissioning models so that NHS County Durham and Darlington can make an informed decision with regard to the commissioning or decommissioning of the service.

The models for consideration are as follows:

- to decommission the existing service - the patient list would be dispersed to other GP practices in the area and patients requiring a walk-in service would need to go to the service within the same centre, until the service moves.
- to commission the same service.
- to re-design and commission a different service.

To support this decision NHS County Durham and Darlington in conjunction with North East Primary Care Services Agency (NEPCSA), will undertake activity to:

- determine stakeholder opinion of the existing service
- determine stakeholder opinion of commissioning / decommissioning options

Consultation, engagement and communications implications

The review has a potentially high level of sensitivity for both the current and future service users as well as the perceived impact of potential service change as seen by stakeholders such local authority partners and the current provider. Stakeholder communications and involvement is key to ensure any such risks are identified from the outset and mitigated wherever possible.

In reviewing the commissioning or decommissioning option for the Darlington Darzi Practice, NHS County Durham and Darlington must consider whether a formal consultation with patients and the public is required, or whether robust communications and engagement will be appropriate.

NHS organisations must consult formally when considering a proposal for a substantial development of a health services or for a substantial variation in the provision of a service. Variation in a service is defined by the extent and impact of changes for patients.

In undertaking communications and engagement without formal consultation we would need to be satisfied that there would be alternative service availability, quality and choice for those patients affected e.g. if this change did require patients to register with other local GP practices, they would receive the same level of services from their new GP practice.

In addition, we would need to look at the level of choice of GP practices in central Darlington so that those people from the surrounding population should not have to travel significantly further to access services.

The comparison of postcode data for registered patients indicates the availability of other GP practices within the Darlington boundary if the registered list were to be dispersed but it is not possible to estimate which practice these patients would choose to access. In addition, the Darlington Darzi practice offers services to both registered and unregistered patients on a seven day a week from 8 am to 8 pm whereas equivalent services are currently not available from alternative GP practices. Current GP practice service provision is 8 am to 6pm Monday to Friday and the out of hours provider is available between 6pm and 8am.

Formal consultation proposal

It is proposed that a formal consultation is undertaken for a period of six weeks; this is on the basis that the review will potentially recommend a substantial variation in service.

It is usual practice to allow three months for consultation exercises on proposed service changes, but it may be reasonable to allow a shorter period where the circumstances justify it .e.g. where the details of the proposal have already been the subject of public debate or public involvement.

It is acknowledged that some engagement has already been undertaken with the public in relation to the urgent care strategy and relocation of the urgent care centre in Darlington which is currently co-located with the Darlington Darzi Practice. However, this does not remove the need for a formal consultation with both registered patients and those who access the Darlington Darzi Practice as unregistered patients.

The period of six weeks is proposed as this is length of time would be appropriate for an equivalent engagement exercise to seek feedback from GP practice patients and the local community about the health services they wish to have to meet their needs, to highlight areas they most value and any improvements they would like to see.

It is proposed that the consultation starts on Monday 25th June 2012 and ends on Friday 3rd August 2012.

Darlington Darzi Practice Consultation Communications and Engagement Plan

A consultation plan is outlined at Appendix 1.

A stakeholder map is outlined at Appendix 2.