

**Response of the Joint City and County Health Scrutiny Committee  
to the Consultation on the Proposed Merger of  
Nottingham City Hospital and Queen's Medical Centre Nottingham  
University Hospital NHS Trusts**

## **Background**

The all party Joint City and County Health Scrutiny Committee is a body established to scrutinise issues and decisions related to NHS services which affect the conurbation of Nottingham. It draws its membership from Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and the surrounding District and Borough Councils of Ashfield, Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe.

## **Process**

David Edwards, Interim Chief Executive of Queen's Medical Centre (QMC), and Tim Woods, Finance Director of Nottingham City Hospital (NCH), attended a meeting of the Committee held on 20 September 2005 to present to Members the consultation document on the proposed merger of the two organisations. Members then agreed to establish an informal study group to examine the matter more closely.

The study group met on 1 November and determined a list of issues which they wished to explore further.

David Edwards returned to the study group with Jenny Leggott, Acting Chief Executive of NCH, on 16 November to discuss the issues raised by Members. At this meeting they provided a written submission which addressed many of the matters raised at the earlier meeting of the study group. This paper is attached as an appendix to this response. The study group agreed a response which was forwarded to the whole Committee for agreement. The Committee amended the response produced by the Panel and agreed that it should be forwarded to the Trent Strategic Health Authority to feed into their consultation on the merger.

## **Response to the Consultation**

The Joint Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Health Scrutiny Committee supports the principle of merger of the two organisations and, given the backdrop of increasing competition between NHS and private providers and an increasing need for financial prudence, understands the rationale underlying the decision to explore and consult on merger. They also recognised the positive practices of close working between the two trusts upon which potential merger would be based.

However we are concerned at the way in which this radical move is being made in an environment of rapid change and uncertainty across the NHS, and in particular, prior to the publication of the White Paper on Healthcare Outside the Hospital. Management of such a substantial change in these circumstances will be difficult, and flexibility as well as a strong sense of overall direction will be required if it is to result in improved services for patients.

We are also concerned about the impact merger may have on access to services and as a result, on health inequalities. We welcome in principle the proposals to provide higher levels of service in the community provided that there is sufficient funding and capacity for all agencies to deliver this effectively. We stress that personnel must be carefully managed if they are to embrace this agenda and that there must be a sufficient number of retained hospital beds to cope during times of peak need, whilst recognising that the reconfiguration of services to meet the government's agenda may lead to an overall reduction in the number of beds required. We received some reassurance regarding transportation arrangements but stress that both organisations must keep this at the forefront of every stage of the consideration and possible implementation of merger in order to avoid impacting negatively on the ability of our more vulnerable communities to access services.

We welcome Mr Edwards' reassurance that "not in any way shape or form are we going to lose services as a result of merger". We request that this Committee, the PPI Forums and all other relevant bodies are kept fully informed of both development towards merger and any subsequent consideration of changes to services, such as relocation, which may follow the proposed merger and reserve the right to comment as such proposals arise.