

What is a prime provider contract?

Following consultation with the local community, the CCG and Council decided to adopt a prime provider model to deliver community health and social care services in the area.

The prime provider will be responsible for coordinating over 200 community health and social care services. Whilst they will directly deliver some of the services themselves, they will also work in partnership with a wide range of local organisations and sub-contract some services to other providers.

Which organisations bid for the contract?

Two organisations bid for the new prime provider contract:

1. Virgin Care
2. LiNK – a partnership of local providers comprising:
 - Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust
 - Bath and North East Somerset Enhanced Medical Services (BEMS+)
 - Dorothy House Hospice Care
 - Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
 - Sirona care & health

Why was Virgin Care selected as the preferred bidder?

Over 50 service users, carers and subject matter experts have been involved in evaluating the two bids. Their individual scores and feedback have been combined and agreed to identify Virgin Care as the preferred bidder.

People told us they want more care closer to home. Virgin Care will organise their services around GP practices so that people have access to a wider range of health and care professionals in their local community to improve the health and wellbeing of the community.

People told us that the separation between different services can make it harder to get the right support. Virgin Care plan to set up a care coordination centre so you only need to speak to one person to access all the services that can help you.

People told us they only want to tell their story once. Virgin Care have tried and tested technology that will join up both health and social care records securely so that everyone involved in a person's care and support, including the person themselves, has access to the information they need.

Who will make the final decision on whether Virgin Care is awarded the contract?

The CCG and the Council will now begin three months of intensive testing and discussions with Virgin Care to agree a final business case. If we are not satisfied with how these discussions are progressing then we can reopen dialogue with LiNK.

The business case will be presented to the Council and CCG Board at public meetings on the 9th and 10th November respectively to seek their authorisation to formally award the contract. There will then be a five month transition period before services start to transfer to the new provider on 1 April 2017.

Is this privatisation of the NHS?

The aim of the CCG and the Council is to deliver the best health and wellbeing outcomes for our population and we will work with any organisation that can help us to do that whether they are classed as public sector, private sector or voluntary sector.

We have commissioned organisations to deliver health and care services in the community for a number of years including community interest companies, charities and private providers such as domiciliary care agencies. This process has been about finding the best possible organisation to coordinate community services for local people.

Virgin Care has a proven track record of improving outcomes, operating over 250 NHS and social care services across the country. They successfully work alongside a range of providers in other areas including local and national charities, care providers, local businesses, hospital trusts and GPs. Their national scale means that innovations from elsewhere in the country can easily be replicated in B&NES.

Will I have to pay for community services now?

The services provided by Virgin Care will be funded by the CCG and the Council. The vast majority of services will continue to be free at the point of access. Some social care services such as domiciliary care and day services will continue to be subject to a financial assessment and may require contributions from service users. This represents no change from current arrangements.

What will happen to any profit made by Virgin Care?

There will be a clause in the contract which requires any financial surplus to be reinvested into services in B&NES. Virgin Care has committed to meet this requirement.

Have you assessed Virgin Care's tax and financial arrangements?

A full financial assessment including legal compliance against tax arrangements has been completed and Virgin Care are fully compliant. This assessment has also provided sufficient assurance around Virgin Care's financial viability.

How will front line staff be affected? Will I still see the same nurse/carer etc.?

The vast majority of health and care professionals providing frontline care will continue in their current roles after 1 April 2017 although they may be working for a different organisation.

The CCG and the Council have been planning for this carefully. We will ensure that everyone receiving health and care services in B&NES has continuity of care and experiences clear improvements as the community's priorities begin to be delivered.

Why do we need to change?

The demand on local services is increasing rapidly as people are living longer with more complex conditions. If we carry on running services in the same way as we do now then we will run out of money. We need a new approach to delivering health and care services that is focussed on keeping people healthy and independent for as long as possible.

Our consultation with local people identified their top five priorities were:

- A person, not a condition
- A single plan
- Invest in the workforce
- Focus on prevention
- Join up IT systems

Is this just a cost-cutting exercise?

This is not a cost-cutting exercise. We are awarding a contract worth £69.2 million a year for seven years with the option to extend for a further three years which is in line with our current spending on community services.

Why is the contract so long?

The scope of this project includes over 200 services and bringing these together into a simple and easy to use system will take time. A seven year contract allows enough time to plan for the future health and care needs of local people as well as supporting the next generation. The contract length also gives reassurance to the prime provider that they can invest time and money in long term projects to transform services.

Why was a procurement process required?

The CCG and the Council must follow strict Government guidance about procurement for a contract of this size. We must advertise the contract to any qualified provider in the European Union. The procurement process has also given both bidders the chance to showcase the new ideas and technology they can offer to deliver the improvements that local people have asked for.

How will we ensure better health and social care outcomes are delivered?

Progress will be continually reviewed by the CCG, the Council and the prime provider in partnership with other health and social care professionals and people receiving services. This feedback will help to ensure that services continue to meet the needs of the community.

What will happen to providers that are currently delivering services?

The majority of our current community service contracts expire in March 2017 and we will agree in the coming weeks the expected arrangements from April 2017 onwards. We expect a number of current providers to partner and sub-contract with Virgin Care under the new prime provider model.

What experience does Virgin Care have?

Virgin Care delivers more than 250 health and care services around the country. They have cared for more than five million people since they started running services in 2006.

We spoke to a number of other commissioners that have awarded contracts to Virgin Care as well as partners and sub-contractors that work with them. The feedback gathered from these interviews provided evidence of an “outstanding” approach to transitioning services resulting in very positive outcomes for the people in their care as well as for the workforce. In all cases the references demonstrated that Virgin Care have a strong track record for delivering on their promises.