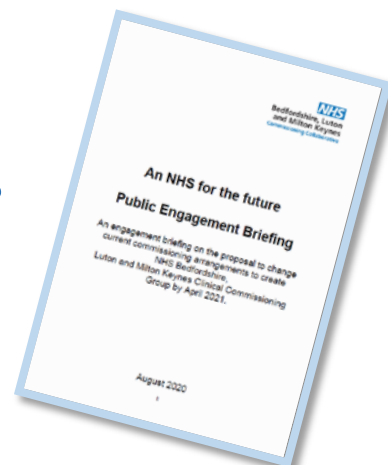


One Clinical Commissioning Group for Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK)

Summary of findings from public engagement



Background

We undertook a survey to give local people the opportunity to share their views on our proposal to bring together Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and to form one CCG from April 2021.

While there was no legal requirement for us to consult around the structural changes, we were keen to listen to local views and understand what is important to residents and to understand any concerns they might have about the proposal, so that where possible, we could take steps to mitigate these concerns.

With Covid-19 prevalent in the community, coronavirus outbreaks in three out of the four areas and traditional face-to-face engagement prohibited, we used new tactics and digital platforms including social media, videos, a British Sign Language (BSL), publicity via partner organisation and our website to reach out to our local populations.

During the six week listening exercise from 3 August to 13 September 2020 we received 954 responses to the survey and a collective response from the Bedford Borough Council Liberal Democrat Group.

Key findings

The responses showed that:

- Across BLMK, the majority of respondents either support or are neutral about the merger, with 384 supporting, 134 neutral, and 423 respondents opposed;
- Breaking down the results by local authority area, shows that people living in three out of four of the Boroughs in BLMK support the proposal. The three Boroughs where the majority of respondents supported the proposal were: Central Bedfordshire (59% in support and 19% neutral), Luton (68% in support and 15% neutral) and Milton Keynes (51% in support and 17% neutral). In Bedford Borough there was a majority of respondents who did not support the proposal (67% oppose and 10% neutral).
- The majority of survey respondents (46%) lived in Bedford Borough. For the first three weeks that the survey was open, the majority view of Bedford Borough's residents was supportive of the proposal (39% in support and 19% neutral). This position changed to one

of a majority of residents expressing opposition to the proposal after a surge of responses (61% of Bedford Borough's responses) being made during the August Bank Holiday weekend. This coincided with some negative coverage about the proposal in the local Bedford media.

- In the feedback, residents welcomed the opportunity to share commissioning, resources and learning across the health system and deliver cost savings to reinvest into local services;
- Some residents across BLMK were keen that the new CCG should retain a local focus and were concerned that the creation of a commissioning organisation that covers a bigger geography may result in a loss of local influence and a loss of the understanding and value of clinical services locally;

Overall, respondents made comments and requested the CCGs to consider issues around the following themes:

- **Accessing health services**
Residents were concerned that patients are having issues accessing services and may be required to travel further distances, should services be taken out of area or moved out of their neighbourhood. Most residents were concerned about the costs associated with public transport.
- **Appointments**
Waiting times and availability of appointments were a key theme with respondents commenting that they would like it to be able to get an appointment more easily and to see a reduction in waiting times for both GP and hospital appointments.
- **Commissioning local services**
Both local and BLMK wide, with respondents expressing concern that the proposal may result in services being removed from their local area.
- **Finance and workforce**
Some respondents were concerned that the formation of one CCG was a cost-cutting exercise and that services may not necessarily improve as a result. Respondents were keen that any savings be reinvested into front line workers and services.
- **Health inequalities**
Respondents were concerned that the CCG should take steps to reduce health inequalities across the area, ensuring that commissioned services meet the needs of individuals.
- **Listening, engaging and involving**
A significant number of respondents outlined the importance of involving patients, staff and partner organisations in commissioning decisions, suggesting that services be co-designed to stave off a 'one size fits all' approach.
- **Local Need**
Respondents were concerned that the larger CCG may mean that local populations were not considered and that localised services may be lost if the CCG was centralised.
- **Role of Governing Body members and Directors**
Respondents called for the Governing Body to be as diverse as the population it serves

and include a mix of professionals, lay members and patients.

- **Request to keep the three CCGs**
Some respondents were opposed to the proposal to become one organisation and outlined their request to retain three sovereign CCGs.
- **Partnership Working, Sharing of information and the BLMK Integrated Care System**
Respondents outlined that the CCG and other health care providers and partners should strive to work as one organisation and facilitate a system approach with all organisations working together and sharing data to improve health services and outcomes for the public.

The BLMK CCGs will continue to engage with the population of Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes, concentrating specifically on the feedback and concerns that we have heard during the public engagement. The feedback gives the CCG the opportunity to better understand and work with residents, patients and Local Authority colleagues to find ways to address and mitigate their concerns.

Next steps

The full findings report formed part of the final submission by Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Groups to NHS England Improvement, as part of the application to become one BLMK CCG by April 2021.

The results will be shared widely with the Governing Body Committees in Common, our stakeholders and providers, as well as those who participated in the survey and provided contact details so that they could be kept informed.

[The full findings report can be viewed here.](#)

End

6 October 2020