

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10.00AM 6TH APRIL 2010

6 April 2010

CCP recommends proposed merger following agreement to ensure that patient choice will not be undermined by vertical integration

The Cooperation and Competition Panel (CCP) has recommended to the Department of Health that the proposed merger of the provider services arms of Ealing PCT (Ealing Provider Services) and Harrow PCT (Harrow Provider Services) with Ealing Hospital NHS Trust (Ealing Hospital) be allowed to proceed.

Following assurances by Ealing Hospital, Ealing PCT and Harrow PCT concerning the protection of patient choice in acute services following the merger, the CCP has concluded that the proposed merger is consistent with the Principles and Rules for Cooperation and Competition.

CCP Director Andrew Taylor commented:

“The vertical integration element of this merger raised some new issues for the Panel who felt there was a realistic prospect that choice of acute service provider would be adversely affected for some patients. The Panel was particularly concerned that those patients using community services at the merged entity and requiring an onward referral might find their choice of acute care constrained, with preference given to acute services delivered at the merged entity.”

“The Panel was pleased that in response to these concerns, Ealing Hospital, Ealing PCT and Harrow PCT committed to a range of undertakings to ensure that choice of acute care provider for patients in this situation would be preserved.”

Mr Taylor added:

“In considering the effect of the proposed merger on patient choice and competition in both community services and acute services the Panel noted the PCTs’ own commissioning plans as well as the requirements of the new PCT procurement guide. Taken together, the Panel was reassured that that the proposed new organisation will face strong competition from other potential providers of community services in Ealing and Harrow to ensure a continuing focus on delivering the best service for patients.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The Cooperation and Competition Panel's (CCP) report and further information on the CCP's approach to mergers is available on the CCP's website at www.ccp-panel.org.uk
2. The Department of Health and London Strategic Health Authority will now consider the CCP's advice and recommendation.
3. The Principles and Rules for Cooperation and Competition form the basis of the Department of Health's policy of managing cooperation and competition in the NHS in a fair, consistent and transparent manner. The Principles and Rules aim to ensure the NHS comprises providers and commissioners who deliver the needs of their patients and population, and that both providers and commissioners co-operate to foster patient choice and offer patients an experience of a seamless health service, regardless of organisational boundaries, whilst maintaining service continuity and sustainability. The role of the CCP is to advise on the application of the Principles and Rules.
4. For inquiries about the Co-operation and Competition Panel contact Tom Frusher, Policy and Communications Director, on 0207 270 5442/07825 256 530 or visit www.ccp-panel.org.uk