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PRESS RELEASE

SUFFOLK AND NORTH EAST ESSEX AT THE FOREFRONT OF PROVIDING BETTER CARE FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

Suffolk and North East Essex is leading the way in providing better care for local people after being named today as one of four areas to join the development of integrated care across health, social care and the voluntary sector. Leaders say it signals the start of a journey to introduce an Integrated Care System across the region.

An Integrated Care System joins up all parts of the health and care system including GPs, hospitals, community care and social care as well as physical and mental health services. People would find it easier to access services, see more joined up care delivery and staff should find it easier to work with colleagues from other organisations.

Nick Hulme, STP Lead, said: "This is fantastic news for people living across Suffolk and North East Essex. We are still at the beginning of a journey to improve services for local people and to bring about common sense improvements to the way we provide health and care. We want to make it easier for people to access services and to reduce the stress we cause them because of the complex way our different organisations provide services. By going beyond our organisational boundaries, we will better support people to live healthier lives, provide services closer to people's homes and help patients to stay out of hospital when they do not need to be there."

STP Programme Director, Susannah Howard, said: "As part of the integrated development programme, Suffolk and North East Essex will benefit from additional support, central funding as well as more flexibilities which will help us improve the way our local system operates."

Welcoming today's announcement from NHS England, patient Ian Williams from Rattlesden near Stowmarket said: "When I was diagnosed with cancer, I received outstanding care from two different local NHS organisations. However, if there was one area that could have improved it was the sharing of my notes between clinicians at the two hospitals. While I was recovering from surgery at West Suffolk Hospital, it soon became clear that clinicians there did not have access to my notes as my surgery was carried out elsewhere. This new joined up arrangement sounds like it will remove such barriers and help patients and clinicians alike."

Stowmarket GP Dr Mark Shenton, said: “Working with a number of different organisations is nothing new to us. However, truly joining up so that there is a seamless service for local people is something we believe will bring huge benefits to the people we serve. Leading a healthy life should not be determined by where you live.” Dr Shenton added: “My colleagues and I would like to see everyone enjoy a healthy and happy life, no matter where they live. It is unacceptable that a person’s wealth, background and postcode has such a major impact on their overall health. We want to have conversations with local people and partners about this vision in order to ensure everyone has a say in how this could be achieved.”

Today’s announcement comes less than two months since Suffolk and North East Essex was awarded £87m to support the merger of Ipswich and Colchester hospitals and the development of hospital services in Clacton, Colchester and Harwich.

Colchester GP, Dr Hasan Chowhan, said: “This recent funding as well as today’s announcement shows there is real confidence in our system which is to be welcomed. However, we are at the start of a journey that will need to see close working and dialogue with a number of partners including primary care, voluntary sector, local councils and patients to ensure our vision becomes a reality.”

Dr Stephen Dunn, Chief Executive of West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, said: “We have a real aspiration in Suffolk and North East Essex to work as one system which we hope will see us overcoming obstacles across organisational boundaries to streamline services. We strongly believe it will bring more efficiencies in how we work but more importantly improve the experience of patients, carers and citizens.”

One of the key aspects of an Integrated Care System is for the local system to provide support or care closer to people’s homes. One example of this already happening across Suffolk and North East Essex is Social Prescribing which is a range of non-clinical community services such as walking clubs or self help groups, often provided by local voluntary groups. There has been national recognition of its potential to help support people to manage their own care.

Sharon Alexander, Chief Officer of Community Voluntary Services Tendring, said: “The voluntary sector has a vital role in making the best use of all community volunteer initiatives with maximum involvement of each and every community. It is not about simply providing a short-term service to patients. It is about developing long term community relationships that will enable us to grow health creating communities. Volunteers have a crucial role to make this a reality.”

Abdul Razaq, Director of Public Health and Protection at Suffolk County Council, said: “We have a great opportunity to make a deep and lasting impact on prevention of determinants of ill health such as the quality of homes and homelessness. For instance, by working in a more integrated way with social housing, private landlords, planning authorities at district and borough level and the voluntary sector, we will be able to improve our support to our residents and help them live in a better way. I believe working in a truly integrated way will result in more lives being saved.”

This ambition to work outside organisational boundaries in an integrated way is an approach Suffolk and North East Essex is calling *Can Do Health and Care*. *Can Do Health and Care* is about recognising the positive difference that local health and care organisations and their staff can make for the people they serve when they work well together. For communities and patients, *Can Do Health and Care* will eventually mean:

- Most care focused closer to home in the community;
- Hospital care only for those most in need;
- High quality, accessible services;
- Fewer barriers between services from the NHS, local councils and health providers.

During the Autumn, teams of clinicians will be visiting Suffolk and North East Essex to find out what people would like from their health and care system. A new website is being developed - www.candohealthandcare.org - which will contain information about our ideas and how you can have your say.