

July 2024

Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System

Forthcoming shared pathology network and new provider

A new shared pathology network is being created across the local Integrated Care System (ICS) in Hertfordshire and West Essex. The network will include pathology services currently provided by the local hospital trusts and the Integrated Care Board (ICB). The hospital trusts are East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust, Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust and West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

NHS Improvement requires the partnership to develop a shared pathology service that is sustainable for hospitals, community services and GPs and the patients that we all care for. A full business case was approved by the partnership for the procurement of a contractor to deliver the new network of pathology services.

Health Services Laboratories (HSL) is the newly appointed contractor to whom pathology services and staff from across the three hospital trusts will be transferred in early 2025.

Dear primary care and community health providers,

A new contract for a forthcoming shared networked pathology service across Hertfordshire and West Essex has recently been awarded to Health Services Laboratories (HSL). From early 2025 HSL will provide pathology services across the three hospital trusts (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust, Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust and West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust) and the wider integrated health system in Hertfordshire and West Essex (HWE ICS). This includes provision for the pathology services you currently use as GP practices or providers in the wider community.

This is part of [a national programme](#) initiated by NHS Improvement and taking place across the country as directed by the [Carter review](#).

Herts and West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) along with the three trusts and the wider ICS explored different options to develop a single shared pathology service to ensure a sustainable service to support our hospitals, community services, GPs and the patients we care for.

Chief executives from the three acute Trusts and the ICB approved a business case to bring in a contractor to provide pathology services and subsequently awarded the contract to HSL in March 2024.

The partnership programme is now in a mobilisation phase where the three trusts prepare to transfer services including most pathology staff to the new provider in early 2025.

Key points about the new service;

In the first instance;

- you won't see too much change in the way you currently receive the pathology service,
- your test turnaround time will remain the same,
- specimen collections from your practices will continue as before, we expect it to be a seamless switch over to the new provider,
- you will receive tubes/ vials and other test stock as you do now,
- you will still be able to use the online systems to order and view test results.

Changes to the services will be phased-in during the following developments after the transfer. The Pathology programme team and HSL will update you at each stage as;

- a new central laboratory is built at Croxley Park in Watford to deliver most of the routine pathology testing, including pathology services for GPs and community providers,
- the existing labs on each hospital site are converted to deliver essential on-site pathology services for inpatients and the emergency department.

Throughout these developments clinical involvement will be maintained from both acute sites and GP practices to provide clinical oversight on preparing services for hand over and beyond.



Expected Timescales

We expect the service to fully transfer and go live early 2025. As set out above, there will then be some further transformation to the new pathology network with the new hub laboratory, expected to be operational in 2026 at Croxley Park, to deliver most of the routine pathology testing, including pathology services for GPs and community providers. There will also be refurbishment of the acute hospital pathology laboratories.

Keeping in contact with you

We have a schedule of presentations booked in to talk to primary care colleagues about the forthcoming network and its new provider HSL. HSL will also be contacting primary care providers to introduce themselves and visit your phlebotomy clinics and facilities.

There will also be updates at key programme milestones in the [ICS GP Bulletin](#).

Further information

Further information on the future pathology network can be found on the ICS web site [here](#).

The team running the pathology procurement programme sit within the pathology business unit of the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System (HWE ICS). They are based in Gate House office in Welwyn Garden City. If you have any questions for the team please do email them at westherts.hwepathology@nhs.net. Our contractor Health Services Laboratories are based in London. You can visit their website <https://www.hslpathology.com/>

We look forward to updating you further in the coming months.

Best wishes,

Lance McCarthy
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The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust,
Senior responsible officer for
the ICS pathology procurement programme

Jane Halpin,
Chief Executive,
Hertfordshire and West Essex
Integrated Care Board