

PROPERTY MATTERS

ISSUE: 4



Letter from Graham Roberts, Chief Executive of Assura Group



Welcome to the latest edition of Property Matters, as we look back at what has already been a year of fundamental change, both for Assura Group and the wider UK healthcare sector.

We recently celebrated the acquisitions of MP Realty and the One Life Medical Centre in Middlesbrough and hosted a House of Commons reception.

However, 2014 has also highlighted recurrent issues for primary care premises development, as it was reported that the NHS is still facing a high number of unprocessed premises applications.

This edition pays close attention to how we can build better primary care premises with which to support both local GPs and secondary care providers, how healthcare professionals can best work with their current resources, and what might be done to progress development over the coming months.

Graham Roberts

HOW CAN WE BUILD THE PRIMARY CARE MODEL OF THE FUTURE?

Dr James Kingsland and Graham Roberts

Reports of a 'postcode lottery' for British patients have drawn attention to the stark differences between general practices across the UK. This invites discussion of what factors unify the NHS, and begs the question whether a one-size-fits-all model of primary care can exist in modern Britain.

There are three strategies that could establish a strong model of primary care, all of which would work together to create an integrated system, and currently share the problem of needlessly duplicated services.

The first reform that would cut costs and establish a more effective model of care is the introduction of a tariff that pays less for in-patient care, or does not pay for unnecessary services. This would alleviate a great deal of strain on both primary and secondary care, and would transfer vital services to local medical centres.

The second transformative action would be to redeploy, rather than reduce, the NHS workforce. Allocating medical professionals to different sectors or levels of care would utilise the diverse skill set present in the NHS and enrich the quality of treatment available to patients.

Although the expansion of medical premises to accommodate pharmacies, dentists, and optometrists has proven useful in retaining patients and easing the strain on other primary care providers, it is the redeployment of secondary services to frontline care that will have the most significant impact on the NHS.

The third means of releasing funds and consolidating care is the disposal of NHS assets. This is controversial, due to the prevalent misconception that closing medical facilities equates to job losses. The reality is that the UK health service is in possession of a number of valuable assets locked up in estates that are not fulfilling their purpose in an efficient way.

The three-strand strategy for rebuilding the NHS is not a simple one, nor is it a quick fix. It requires some difficult decisions for healthcare legislators and providers as well as a seismic shift in public attitudes to seeking medical attention. However, it is feasible and it is the necessary route towards a sustainable, valuable future for healthcare.

BMA RESULTS SHOW ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT IN MORE THAN HALF OF UK PRACTICES

The recent BMA survey results have revealed that over 50% of practices have received no refurbishment or redevelopment for more than ten years.

This highlights the freeze on premises funding, which has been labelled 'fossilised' by GPC Chairman Dr Chaand Nagpaul, and is a source of continued frustration for GPs, patients, developers and investors.

Though it is encouraging to see these issues brought to the surface for public discussion, there is still a risk that the situation will be put on the back burner as developing A&E services continues to take precedence over primary care.

Hopefully NHS legislators will respond to the new statistics with some strong public engagement and meaningful conversation on the premises predicament.

For more details of the survey results see page 4.

Featured Charity



Assura Group is delighted to be working with our chosen charity for 2014/15, Brainwave.

Brainwave is a charity that helps children with disabilities and developmental delay achieve their full potential. The children have a range of conditions including Autism, brain injuries such as Cerebral Palsy and genetic conditions such as Down's Syndrome.

Brainwave has three centres around the country in Bridgewater (Somerset), Witham (Essex) and Birchwood (Warrington) although their patients come from all over the country. If you think their services may be suitable for one of your patients please get in touch with them www.brainwave.org.uk/contact-us/

www.brainwave.org.uk

ASSURA GROUP WELCOMES ONE LIFE TO ITS PORTFOLIO

Assura Group recently completed a £12.3million acquisition of the 35,500 sq ft One Life Building in Middlesbrough.

The building accommodates a GP practice, a pharmacy, a day case operating theatre, community services, and mammography and x-ray services along with other outpatient services. The One Life Building is recognised as an important element of the health infrastructure of Middlesbrough, and is a prime example of the type of space required to meet the growing role that primary care is playing in the NHS.

We are also delighted to welcome our new tenants of the properties that we acquired from MP Realty Holdings Group.

OWNER OCCUPIER OR TENANT?

We have created two dedicated roles within our property team, as we continue to receive enquiries from GP practices wanting to sell their premises and take a leaseback.

Many GPs are considering the route of sale and leaseback for a variety of reasons, the main ones being retirement and succession planning. Alternatively, the property may require investment to extend or refurbish and, by partnering with Assura, either or both options can be accommodated.

Adam Lowe and Alex Taylor have now been appointed to advise on how, if we were to purchase your premises and lease it back to you, Assura could invest capital to upgrade, extend or refurbish the practice's premises.

The value placed on the property is market value based on the assumption that the partners of the practice enter into an NHS England and District Valuer (DV) approved lease. The rent at commencement and on review is either market value as determined by the DV, or at RPI subject to NHS England approval.

If you are interested in exploring this route, please contact Alex or Adam. If you want to be put in contact with a practice that has recently gone through this process we would be more than happy to make the introductions for you.



Adam Lowe



Alex Taylor

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BMA SURVEY RESULTS

The BMA report has brought other premises issues to light, with four in ten GP practices telling the survey that their premises are inadequate.

In addition, 70% of those surveyed admitted that they feel their premises are too small to deliver extended services for patients, while 60% said the properties were too small to provide vital training for staff.

With GPs delivering over 90% of health services, yet receiving less than 10% of the funding, the latest figures are perhaps the logical culmination of increased focus on A&E at the expense of primary care.

What we really need is acknowledgement from legislators that the upgrading and redeveloping of primary care premises is integral to easing the strain on secondary services. Improvement of primary care facilities does not necessarily require big-ticket investment, but could be relatively modest improvements to prevent the deterioration of practices.

This latest topic to be added to the primary care agenda may signal the beginning of increased interest in the premises predicament; however, experience has taught that we might still have to sit tight until we see a real breakthrough.

In the meantime, GPs and developers must look for innovative approaches that support patients and the local community in as proactive and cost-efficient a way as possible. We remain focused on providing quality primary care premises to ensure GPs have the resources they need to reinvigorate the NHS.



If you are interested in more information or would like details on how Assura Group can help to develop your property, you can get in touch in the following ways:

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