

PROPERTY MATTERS

ISSUE: 5

Letter from Graham Roberts, Chief Executive of Assura



Welcome to the first Property Matters of 2015, as we look ahead to what promises to be a pivotal year for UK healthcare.

Following Simon Stevens' 5 Year Forward View, and anticipating the central role of healthcare in the upcoming general election, this issue will look at the current systems in place for primary care development, as well as the potential changes we might expect over the coming months.

Though there are no clear answers to what this year might have in store, we can look forward to a number of exciting projects from Assura. We can also celebrate the successes of the last quarter, with more significant investments and schemes completed.

Our recent completion of the community health centre in Sudbury is already making an invaluable difference for patients and staff in their communities, with more to follow as we continue on our mission to deliver the best possible medical centres to patients nationwide.

We welcome the announcement of the £1bn primary care investment fund to facilitate the improvement of front line services and access to GP premises by investment in the primary care estate.



Graham Roberts

CORPORATE NEWS

Keeping with the spirit of a new year and new start, we have changed the company name from Assura Group Limited to Assura plc.

In other news from the business, we were delighted to announce the further investment in 11 centres in November, which will support the work of approximately 90 GPs and meet the health requirements of around 115,000 patients in England and Wales.

This year has got off to a similarly promising start, as we recently completed the £3.5m acquisition of properties in Trellech, Monmouthshire and Wetherby, North Yorkshire.

Manchester NHS Budget Devolution

We are strong advocates for innovation in seeking solutions to NHS challenges. The recent announcement regarding joint stewardship of health and social care in Manchester is clearly a major innovation and we look forward to seeing how this will work in practice. We hope the removal of artificial barriers will provide an opportunity for demonstrating clear benefits to the community and all professional care providers of co-location and greater collaboration.

A MODERN VISION FOR PRIMARY CARE



What the rise of super-centres could mean for NHS development.

Andrew Darke

Managing Director of Property at Assura.

The 'Latest Developments in Primary Healthcare Property Conference' recently brought the problem of non-compliant primary care facilities firmly into the spotlight, reinforcing the importance of having "updated, compliant premises for expanded community-based primary medical services."

The comments, made by conference chairman Paul Stacey, draw attention not only to the rapid deterioration of primary care premises, but to the common predicament faced by single-handed GPs in maintaining their practices. This public support of those struggling to deliver a multitude of different patient requirements is both timely and necessary, particularly given the plans laid out in October's announcement of 5 Year Forward View (5YFV) funding.

Assura has been working closely with a number of GPs and CCGs based nationwide to ascertain how the outcomes of the 5YFV could revitalise and produce a solution for practice premises.

The conference's decision to back 'super-centres' as a replacement for converted homes and old listed buildings demonstrates not only a modern vision of fit-for-purpose care premises, but a forward-thinking approach for primary care clinicians and staff.

My hope is that healthcare legislators are listening to and taking note of the plans for multipurpose practices detailed in the conference attendees' comments. In the aftermath of a long-term freeze on primary care funding there is a great deal to be done, and we need to provide the right space that is needed by GPs for the future growth of their patient bases.

The vision is for functioning, mixed-use, high quality premises that prioritises the correct care over all services. By creating premises for the appropriate services, the requirement for excessive A&E visits or walk-in centres is much reduced or even removed, saving huge amounts of NHS expenditure and providing a reliable and sustainable base for patients and staff alike.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Darke'.

Are you considering selling your surgery?
Please call Adam Lowe or Alexander Taylor
to discuss your options.

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5YFV ENVISAGES PRIMARY CARE PROPERTY INVESTMENT

NHS chief Simon Stevens made a significant contribution to pre-election dialogue when he unveiled his 5YFV announcement late last year. In pre-empting the major political parties' 2015 manifestos, Stevens established what many have called a launch plan for the NHS, by the NHS.

The plan requires a joined-up approach between Government and medical professionals and creates an extended network that includes social care services, housing providers and private investors that can work together to deliver the required facilities.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt responded to these plans by pledging £1bn to building a four-pillar model of healthcare, which can be broken down into: a strong economy, new models of care, innovation and efficiency and culture.

The £1bn will be rolled out over four years to support new primary care infrastructure. This is expected to pay for new surgeries and care facilities, as well as being used towards pilots for new models of care throughout the UK.

These new models, which include further integration of health and social care and the development of community hospitals, are addressed in the 5YFV.

What is now needed is a coherent set of guidelines and information made available to GPs and legislators about what is required of them, how they can apply for improvements and what measures need to be taken. There needs to be support for those that are struggling with capacity and information about merging or co-locating to improve collaborative services with the social and third sector providers and commissioners.

What makes the comments made at the conference so important for the future of primary care funding is that they acknowledge the need for integrated care, but also potentially merged practices. GPs are often housed in or have the wrong infrastructure for the new models of care being demanded of them. If the new models are to be successful and sustainable, every aspect of care delivery must be examined and understood.



Whether you are a GP based in a leafy suburb or an inner city practice, the chances are you have felt the strain of frozen funding and multiplying patient contacts. With 543 surgeries at risk of closure due to GPs retiring, and a BMA survey revealing that 40 per cent of GPs admit their practices are not adequate for patient care, this is a widespread problem that will require constant review and attention.

The shift to larger, energy-efficient health and social care hubs that can accommodate services from pharmacies to counselling to dentistry to childcare, alongside core GP services, can undoubtedly reap rewards for patients and staff across the UK.

The private sector is ready and willing to invest the necessary capital to deliver the vision by providing the appropriate fit for purpose future-proofed infrastructure.

Did you miss the 16th February deadline for submitting your Property Initiation Document (PID) or Improvement Grant? Please get in touch if you need help applying for the 2015/16 tranche of funding.

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CASE STUDY: SUDBURY



Where:

Sudbury Community Health Centre, Suffolk

When:

Commenced April 2013, completed December 2014

Requirement:

West Suffolk CCG commissioned Assura's services with the support of NHS Property Services Ltd and NHS England. The task was to replace three outdated healthcare buildings in Sudbury with an integrated community health centre, which would cater to the diverse needs of patients in the local area.

Though this requirement stemmed in part from the fact that the existing premises were unfit to match these patient needs, the project also reflects a wider condition for the NHS, as it works to advance the visibility and accessibility of its frontline services.

What Sudbury required was a high quality development that not only matched all of the design criteria, but increased community engagement with available primary care resources.

Solution:

Assura was the developer and investor on the scheme; delivering a 3,330 sqm building that could accommodate the general practice service from Siam GP surgery, whilst also hosting specialist clinics for paediatrics, dermatology, audiology, gynaecology, rheumatology and leg ulcer care.

Other clinics provided on the site were designed and equipped to deal with musculoskeletal physiotherapy, podiatry, speech and language therapy and continence treatment. X-ray facilities were included in the care centre's resources as well as phlebotomy equipment and other resources.

In addition to the specialised services, the building was also developed in line with the NHS commitment to co-locating health and social services, with particular attention to mental health treatment. The practice was developed to include a mental health facility and counselling services in order to meet the need for community support.

The vision for Sudbury Community Health Centre was that it would operate as a one-stop-shop for any frontline care that a local patient might need. With this in mind, a pharmacy and dentist, as well as departments for ophthalmology, neurology and urology, support the advanced services and general practice.

In order to complete the project successfully, the plans not only had to correspond with the long-term vision of care for the NHS, but with its ongoing commitment to sustainability. The building features solar panels, a green roof and a high level of insulation, resulting in lower and more efficient power consumption.

Also featured in the final plans were dedicated electric charging points, enabling people with electric cars to charge them up whilst attending an appointment in the centre. These visitors will also have access to the free car park attached, while any visitors getting to the building via public transport will have no difficulty doing so thanks to the full cooperation of local bus companies.

Result:

The final completion of the £8.2 million health facility now sees a 2-storey building that plays host to a range of frontline services that appropriately address a multitude of different patient needs.

The development has been awarded an interim BREEAM Excellent rating, delivering its resources from eco-efficient and sustainable premises. The centre is easily accessible to patients from the local area via public transport and provides 180 car parking spaces to those with cars.

Sudbury Community Health Centre now plays a central role to the provision of care in the local area by offering everyday and advanced care to patients. This alleviates the strain on nearby hospitals and improves the continued drive to place reliable, high quality healthcare at the heart of British communities.

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

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