Inpatient Care for People with Learning Disabilities. Our future plans
This document is about our proposal to change the way we provide inpatient care for people with learning disabilities in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Currently we provide an inpatient service at The Ridgeway Centre in High Wycombe.

The Ridgeway Centre is an assessment and treatment unit which provides care for up to 12 people who have a learning disability, and who also have complex and difficult to manage behaviours which can’t be safely treated in the community.

Patients at The Ridgeway Centre mainly come from the Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire areas. A few patients from Hampshire and Dorset occasionally use the service when the need arises.

In the coming months, community and inpatient learning disability services are changing across Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

These wider changes have an impact on The Ridgeway Centre.

As a result, Southern Health believes that inpatient care would be better provided at several alternative units. If this were to happen, The Ridgeway Centre would close.

This document explains the main reasons we want to change the way we provide inpatient care and what these changes would look like.

We would welcome your views and details of how to contact us are at the end of this document.
Buckinghamshire’s learning disability services will be transferring from Southern Health to a new NHS provider - Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (HPFT) - this summer, with the transfer completing on 1 September 2016.

The new services will reflect consultation with local people and aim to provide:

- more specialist community healthcare services for people closer to home; and

- more intensive support in the community - reducing the need for people to have an inpatient stay.

For those people who do need to be admitted to hospital, the new arrangements will see people being treated (from 1 July, for new patients) at HPFT’s Dove Ward at Kingfisher Court in Radlett, Hertfordshire - instead of The Ridgeway Centre.

There are many benefits to this. The specialist inpatient beds at Dove Ward are provided within a larger, state-of-the-art centre, so patients and staff will have access to a wider range of specialist support and facilities.

As a result of these changes, and the reduced need for beds at The Ridgeway Centre, Southern Health needs to consider the options for the unit’s future.

Patient safety and quality care are our top priorities and we believe these are best served by closing The Ridgeway Centre and instead treating Oxfordshire patients at other neighbouring units.
Clinical reasons

The transfer of Buckinghamshire services will mean The Ridgeway Centre’s consultant psychiatrist will join the new provider, leaving the unit with no senior doctor.

We also have concerns that there won’t be enough staff or skills to run a safe service.

Financial pressures

Regrettably, in today’s financial climate, we need to think about the cost of keeping The Ridgeway Centre open just for Oxfordshire patients (when Buckinghamshire patients transfer to Dove Ward).

The reduced size of the unit would make it too expensive to run and this would have an impact on funding for our community learning disability services.

Also, the way we work with Oxfordshire commissioners means that, although we have six beds available for Oxford patients at The Ridgeway Centre, people are always placed in the most appropriate unit for their often very complex needs.

This frequently means that they are treated in other neighbouring specialist inpatient units anyway - and not necessarily in The Ridgeway Centre.
What are the other options?

Instead of closing The Ridgeway Centre and providing services elsewhere, the only other option would be to keep The Ridgeway Centre open for Oxfordshire patients at half its current size, with six inpatient beds.

The benefits of this option are a service that is as close to Oxford city centre as possible and continuity of care for those who may have stayed at The Ridgeway Centre before.

However, as mentioned earlier, there are a number of issues with this option due to financial pressures and most importantly, issues of patient safety and the quality of care when the unit becomes an isolated service in Buckinghamshire.
If we were to close The Ridgeway Centre later this year, we would be able to place future inpatients in units based on what is best for their individual clinical needs.

Whilst this will mean patients may have to travel further to receive treatment, it will enable us to choose the best care possible for them.

Inpatient units we are currently considering for alternative care include those in:

- Reading, Berkshire
- Bracknell, Berkshire
- Northampton, Northamptonshire
- Stroud, Gloucestershire
- Stonehouse, Gloucestershire
- Winchfield, Hampshire
- Southampton, Hampshire
- Radlett, Hertfordshire

These are between 46 and 69 miles from Oxford city centre (The Ridgeway Centre is about 30 miles from Oxford city centre).

For those patients living outside of Oxford city centre, in other parts of Oxfordshire, the travel distance may be reduced, depending on the unit they are treated in.
What about current inpatients at The Ridgeway Centre?

It is our intention that where possible, patients already being treated at The Ridgeway Centre would remain there until they are ready to be safely discharged.

Future patients would begin to receive their treatment at alternative units at some point over the summer.

Will community services change too?

Importantly, there are no proposed changes to where community learning disability services are delivered in Oxfordshire.

Services will be transferring from Southern Health to a new provider at some point over the next 18 months – but timescales for this have not yet been confirmed. We will share more details about what this will mean for local people when they are known. These future changes form part of the development and delivery of the Oxfordshire Learning Disability Strategy (the Big Plan) and the Transforming Care Plan over the next three years.

Additionally, community learning disability services will still be provided in Buckinghamshire and most of the staff who currently work for Southern Health will transfer to the new provider, to ensure continuity of care for the people we look after.

When would the changes happen?

They would be likely to happen in the autumn of 2016.

What happens next?

A final decision will be made later this summer.
Southern Health’s preferred option for the future of The Ridgeway Centre is to close the unit and provide the same amount of inpatient care elsewhere. This is a preferred option based on the wider changes to learning disability services, patient safety, quality of care and the need to make the best use of NHS resources.

However, before any final decision is made, we want to hear your views. You can do this in several ways.

- We will be hosting a meeting for families of those who are being (or have recently been) treated at The Ridgeway Centre.

- We will also be happy to arrange a separate meeting for any other service users, families, carers or patient groups who wish to find out more. This includes anyone who is not currently using our inpatient services but may be using our community services. Contact donna.schell@southernhealth.nhs.uk if you would like to do this.

- Finally, we also have a feedback form where you can send us your comments. You can get this in paper or electronic format by calling Rachel Bird on 01865 228090 or emailing: rachel.bird@southernhealth.nhs.uk.