

**STAKEHOLDER BRIEFING:  
SENT ON BEHALF OF THE AXMINSTER JOINT  
ACTION TEAM**

**NHS Trust in conjunction with Axminster League of  
Friends and Action Group plan to re-open inpatient  
beds at Axminster Community Hospital in July 2015**

**Monday 18 May, 2015**

We are writing to provide an update on our progress to safely reopen the inpatient services at Axminster Community Hospital.

In January 2015, a Joint Action Team was created whose aim was to investigate how funds, tabled by the Axminster League of Friends, could be used to re-instate 16 inpatient beds at Axminster Community hospital while also maintaining the 16 beds in Seaton Community Hospital.

This work followed the decision made by the Trust on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2015 to temporarily consolidate the two 10 bedded inpatient units at Axminster and Seaton to Seaton Hospital due to staff shortages and safety concerns the Trust had relating to small inpatient units. (For more information about safer staffing, please see <http://www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk/2014/09/safer-staffing-ensuring-we-have-enough-nurses-to-deliver-safe-high-quality-care-to-our-patients/>)

Members of the Joint Action Group include the Northern Devon Healthcare Trust, The Axminster League of Friends, The Hospital Action Group and the Seaton League of Friends. The Team have met regularly to investigate,

review and progress the opportunities available towards returning the beds to Axminster.

Since January, the team has been working on a recruitment campaign to recruit enough nurses to re-open Axminster Community Hospital safely. There have been four open days at Seaton, Axminster, Tiverton and Sidmouth hospitals along with a promotion campaign including both radio and newspaper advertising. A new website specifically dedicated to Community Hospitals in Eastern Devon has also been developed ([www.eastdevoncommunityhealth.co.uk](http://www.eastdevoncommunityhealth.co.uk)).

Due to the national nursing shortage, the Trust has vacancies at many of its community hospitals. Therefore, suitable candidates recruited from the open days with the intention of working in Axminster have begun work and are currently based at other community hospital sites until the unit re-opens.

In order to re-open the inpatient unit the Trust needed to fill 420 hours (11.5 full time equivalent) registered nursing posts. To ensure units are not reliant on agency or bank nursing staff at least 80% of these hours needed to be filled with substantively-employed nurses.

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015, at the Joint Action Group meeting at Axminster Hospital, the Trust announced that this 80% target had been surpassed and that the Trust was in a position to create a full roster of nurses. The team are thrilled about this and are now starting to look operationally at re-opening the beds in Axminster. The aim is for the unit to re-open during July.

We will continue to advertise the vacancies using banners, social media and NHS jobs. In the meantime, we plan to fill the remaining 20% of hours with a 'nursing pool' (registered nurses who have expressed an interest in doing some ad hoc hours) also using NHS Professionals. We will also be using some agency staff. A firm date will be given once some more of the operational details have been finalised. .

We have to make it clear that at this point it is the intention to reinstate the beds during the month of July, notwithstanding any unforeseen issues that may arise.

This activity is akin to opening a new hospital and as such the new staff will require significant support from the local community as a whole and we ask that you as key stakeholders in the hospital services are active in ensuring this happens.

The Joint Action Team comprising Darryn Allcorn, Tina Naldrett, Janet McKay, Steve Hudson, Chris Entwistle, Nellie Guttman and Carl Mossman from the NDHT and Barbara Moore (community hospital association) Steve Holt, James Vann, Barbara Nevitt, and Eileen Stuart from Axminster have worked tirelessly and effectively to enable this significant outcome.

More details regarding the reinstatement of the beds will follow later in May or early June.

Thank you for your continued support.