

**CONFIGURATION OF NHS AMBULANCE TRUSTS IN ENGLAND - CONSULTATION**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Cllr G Blackwell  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Keith Parker – Head of Leisure and Environmental Services  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Keith Parker

**Summary:** This report informs Council of proposals to ‘merge’ the four Ambulance Trusts operating in the North West as part of overall proposals to create 11 new Trust covering the whole of England from the existing 31.

<b>Recommendation:</b>	That Full Council supports the proposal to merge the four Ambulance Service NHS Trusts covering the North West into a single Trust.
------------------------	---

**Impact on delivering the Corporate Plan:** The Corporate Plan enshrines the principle that the residents of Copeland should have access to high quality health care services

**Impact on other statutory objectives (e.g. crime & disorder, LA21):**

**Financial and human resource implications:** Nil

**Project & Risk Management:** None

**Key Decision Status**

- **Financial:** None  
- **Ward:** None

**Other Ward Implications:** None

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Similar to the consultation on the structure of the Primary Care Trust structure in the North West elsewhere on this agenda a second consultation paper has been issued in relation to Ambulance Service NHS Trusts. In this case the consultation has been circulated by the three Strategic Health Authorities covering Cumbria and Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Cheshire and Merseyside.
- 1.2 The consultation stresses the proposal to merge the four existing Ambulance Service Trusts is driven by a desire to refocus services towards more patient centred care, towards prevention, and moving more services out of hospital wherever it is safe and effective to do so and ensuring all communities get the services they need. The consultation is about the number and structure of Trusts rather than the nature of the service. It is emphasised that larger trusts would be able to realise administrative and managerial savings while at the same time offering greater resilience at time of regional need during major incidents.

1.3 The benefits of the merger are seen as:

- More investment in front line services.
- More opportunities for staff
- Improved planning for, and ability to handle, chemical, biological or nuclear incidents, terrorist attacks or natural disasters.
- Better equipped and trained workforce and the ability to adopt best practice quickly and consistently.
- Better use of resources to support high performance in all trusts.
- Greater capacity to carry out research and check that patient care is of the highest standard.
- Greater influence in planning and developing better patient services, both regionally and nationally.
- Greater financial flexibility and resilience, ability to plan and make longer-term investment decisions.
- Financial savings achieved through greater purchasing power and economies of scale.
- Improved contingency planning to make sure that the control room will stay fully operational regardless of any information technology or service disruption.
- Improved human resource management, organisational and leadership development .
- Increased investment in new technologies

1.4 The consultation only gives the one option to be considered although comments are welcome. If ultimately formed the proposed North West Trust would, in geographic and resident population terms, be one of the biggest in the Country with a budget (03/04 figures) of £90 million.

1.5 Given the suggested benefits of merging the existing Trusts it is suggested the Council's response should be to support the proposal, but that a comment should be made that the "Council trusts that the needs of rural communities should be recognised within the new arrangements and specific measures taken to ensure people within such areas are guaranteed have access to services of an equal standard to the best".

### **List of Appendices**

Background Papers: Consultation on organisational (boundary) changes to Ambulance Service NHS Trusts in the north west of England.

### **List of Consultees:**

Corporate Team; Cllr G Blackwell