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Epsom Hospital to “merge” with St Georges in Tooting?

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A major NHS reorganisation affecting Epsom residents appears to have been approved behind closed doors, with no public announcement or consultation to date.

Information shared with the *Epsom and Ewell Times* indicates that St George’s Hospital is set to formally merge with Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust under plans approved by their boards on 5 March.

The proposal, described in NHS terms as a “strategic outline case”, is understood to be the first formal step towards a full merger. If progressed, it would ultimately result in Epsom and St Helier ceasing to exist as a separate organisation, with all services brought under a single management structure.

The development was first reported by Putney News, which described the move as having been agreed “behind closed doors” and without any public announcement or consultation. According to that report, no press release has yet been issued and residents have not been formally informed.

Financial pressures driving change

Documents referenced in the material seen by EET suggest the move is being driven by mounting financial pressures across the hospital group.

The combined shortfall is reported to be around £176 million for the current financial year. While government support has historically offset much of this gap, those payments are now being phased out. St George’s has reportedly been given two years to break even, while Epsom and St Helier has been given three.

Epsom and St Helier is also said to be under formal NHS England supervision in relation to its finances, waiting lists and emergency care performance.

No public consultation announced

Despite the scale of the proposed change, there appears to have been no public consultation process announced.

Material circulated internally suggests that staff have been informed and Integrated Care Boards briefed, but that wider public engagement has not yet taken place.

The apparent lack of transparency may raise concern locally, particularly given previous assurances when the two trusts began closer working in 2021 that they would remain separate statutory organisations.

MP response focuses on patient care

Epsom and Ewell’s MP Helen Maguire said she was aware of the developing proposal but emphasised that patient care must remain the priority.

She said: “I am aware the Trust has put a business case forward to the NHS on the possibility of a merger. From my perspective, my primary concern lies with ensuring that regardless of administrative decisions, residents across my constituency and the wider Trust area continue to receive the high-quality healthcare they deserve. I look forward to meeting with Michael Pantlin to discuss these priorities, and will continue to engage with key stakeholders throughout the process to ensure consistency of service provision.”

Her comments suggest the proposal remains under consideration at NHS England level, with further discussions expected.

Hospital Management Response

A spokesperson for St George’s, Epsom and St Helier Hospitals and Health Group (gesh) said: “We have not agreed to merge – at this stage, we have agreed an intention to submit a strategic case for merger to NHS England, asking them to approve developing a full business case.

“This builds on the work we have already done to strengthen the ties between both Trusts – sharing expertise and resources, whilst leveraging the strengths of our services to further improve patient care.

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“We want to reassure people that there are no related planned changes to our services.”

Long-term implications for services

If it proceeded the merger could have significant implications for how services are delivered across south-west London and Surrey, including for Epsom residents relying on local provision.

It also comes against the backdrop of delays to the long-promised Specialist Emergency Care Hospital in Sutton, now expected to open in the 2030s rather than mid-2020s.

While NHS leaders are reported to view the merger as a route to achieving Foundation Trust status and improving financial stability, questions remain about how local services may be affected and when residents will be formally consulted.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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