



CASE STUDY

COMMISSIONING BODY: NHS Western Cheshire and Cheshire West

TITLE: **Options Appraisal for the development of Joint Health Unit for Cheshire West and Chester**

DESCRIPTION: Following the creation of the new unitary authority, Cheshire West and Chester Council, on the 1st April 2009 and the subsequent appointment of a Joint Director for Public Health, the two organisations have committed to work together, with other partners, more effectively to improve the health of the local population. To ensure that this joint working is effective NHS Western Cheshire and Cheshire West and Chester Council have identified the potential to build an infrastructure that supports and develops health and wellbeing of the local population. To ensure this is managed effectively NHS Western Cheshire commissioned a feasibility study and options appraisal for the development of a Joint Health and Wellbeing Unit (JHWU).

Discussions concerning the development of a JHWU date back to 5th February 2009, with the start of a research project into the development of a Unit. A subsequent discussion document was circulated in July 2009 which recommended the creation of a JHWU and the direction of travel was approved by NHS Western Cheshire Board in September 2009.

OUTCOMES: In reviewing the requirements of Cheshire West and Chester relating to delivery of public health promotion related services and in considering the various options available to meet this delivery, the following potential options have been considered:

1. A 'no action' scenario. Continue to operate within existing structure and governance
2. To establish a 'virtual' JHWU through working within existing partnerships
3. To establish formal JHWU as an independent organisation
4. To establish formal JHWU working from within NHS Western Cheshire
5. To establish formal JHWU working from within Cheshire West and Chester Council

The options were scored by preference on interviewees and through subjective scoring against the guiding principles for a JHWU. The options appraisal strongly supported the development of a **Formal Joint Health and Wellbeing Unit, working from within Cheshire West and Chester Council.**

EVALUATION: The review suggests that the Chief Executive's Department within Cheshire West and Chester Council would be the most appropriate 'home' due to its wide remit and influence. The Unit should remain small and flexible in terms of human resources, but be influential through the seniority of its staff and their positions of influence from their perspective employers. Both the PCT and Council have offered a commitment to place staff within the Unit. These positions require further investigation

Stakeholders felt that there is a need for a senior appointment (Unit Director), to provide professional credibility, co-ordinate the work of the Unit and represent the agenda. This role should report to the Joint Director of Public Health.

The Unit should position itself as directly servicing and reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Thematic Group of the LSP. The Thematic Group would ensure that the Unit carries out its missions and tasks, by adopting its annual work programme and financial regulations. This group would be intended to provide supervision of the activities of the Unit and at the same time ensure coherence with LSP policies and coordination with other strategy and thematic partnerships.