

# Devon Doctors delivers safe primary and urgent care services in support of GP practices across the county

## Introduction

Devon Doctors Limited is a social enterprise owned by every GP Practice across Devon.

## Why are we owned by local GP practices?

It is our view that GP Practices are the key partners in the successful delivery of out of hours GP services. High quality GP practices working during the daytime support good quality of care in the out-of-hours period [evenings/weekends and nights] and a high standard of out-of-hours care supports GP practices and their patients in the next working day. GP Practices are in the best position to determine whether the out-of-hours service is well delivered. Local GP Practices provide much of the GP and nurse workforce working out of hours.

## Why are we a social enterprise?

It is our view that this form of organisation combines the efficiency focus of a private sector organisation with the ethical framework of the public sector. We exist for the benefit of local people. The GP practices which own us can derive no financial benefit from that ownership. Any profit is reinvested into the service from which it was derived.

## Background

Devon Doctors was first established in 1996 as a company providing infrastructure support to a number of GP cooperatives across Devon. In 2004 Devon Doctors Limited was formed to provide the GP out-of-hours care for the population of Devon. Devon Doctors have two 100 per cent owned subsidiary social enterprise companies:

**Devon Dental Limited:** Primarily provides the out-of-hours urgent dental service for Devon;

**Devon Health Limited:** Provides specialist primary care services such as end-of-life care, admissions avoidance schemes and General Practice to those people in our population who traditionally do not utilise mainstream primary care services effectively, such as the homeless.



## Mission statement

Devon Doctors provides exceptional out-of-hours and primary care across the county.

## Where are we now?

Devon Doctors Limited was asked to provide the GP out-of-hours cover for the whole of Devon in 2004. Between 2004-2012 we have successfully met and exceeded Department of Health standards and in doing so have established a local and national reputation for the standards of our GP out-of-hours service.

We have more than doubled the size of our business by providing a range of other services and this has allowed us to invest in our staff and in our support services such as governance/IT and HR. Our social enterprise status has also allowed us to invest available profit in the provision of additional clinical shifts which has strengthened our service further.

The local population is increasing but even more importantly the demography of that population is changing in a way which must put additional pressure on all health

## Our social enterprise status has allowed us to invest available profit in the provision of additional clinical shifts...

services in the future. The NHS is itself changing as it seeks to move demand from secondary to primary care and to move more care from the hospital to the home. We are experiencing both a rising demand for our services alongside an increasing level of need from those seeking our help.

There are supply side shortages of GPs and nurses who are willing or able to work out of hours to meet this increased pressure. The competition for GP out-of-hours contracts is intense. We are therefore faced with the choice that if we increase the rates paid to our GPs and/or increase significantly the number of GP shifts we provide we run the risk of losing our contract when it next goes out to tender.

The regulatory regime within which we work has grown both in its scope and its extent. The provision of GP out of hours is a high risk service. There is a need for providers to meet CQC and other national and local standards and quality requirements. We welcome these developments. But they do place additional demands on the organisation many of which did not exist in 2004.

Our strategy for 2013-18 seeks to meet the challenges outlined above head on. We will do this by focusing on the one aim that all clinicians, staff and patients can unite upon – patient safety.

We are not in control of future procurement process undertaken by our Clinical Commissioning Group [CCGs]. We are in control of the service that we deliver to local people. We will focus on patient safety.

We have the ability to overcome the challenges which face us in this period ahead. We have the right values and the right ethical framework from which we provide our services. We have clinicians who are professional, dedicated and flexible – who are loyal to us. We have a great team of staff who are focused on supporting their clinical colleagues.

We are owned by the GP Practices of Devon which own and support us for no gain other than the benefit we give to their practice populations. We have commissioners who value us and want us to succeed and we have a local population that has rated us as among the very best provider of GP out-of-hours care in the country for each of the last five years.

## We will...

We will succeed in our mission over the next five years by achieving the following aims:

- [1] Put patient safety at the forefront of everything we do
- [2] Employ sufficient GPs and nurses to ensure the safety of patients is never compromised
- [3] Ensure clinical staff are never asked to perform beyond their capabilities
- [4] Work with other providers to ensure seamless care
- [5] Be equipped for increases in demand for services
- [6] Foster positive relationships with commissioners
- [7] Provide clinicians with effective operational systems
- [8] Ensure all staff are trained to the highest-possible standards
- [9] Ensure a consistently high level of patient experience
- [10] Adhere to information governance guidelines at all times
- [11] Protect vulnerable children and adults
- [12] Provide exceptional standards in end-of life care

## Our strategic objectives 2013-18

### Performance

- Continue to achieve top 10 per cent NQRs [National Quality Requirements] for our GP out-of-hours urgent care service as



measured by the Primary Care Foundation benchmarking service.

- Meet and exceed all CCG, CQC and other regulatory requirements for all primary care services provided by Devon Doctors, Devon Health and Devon Dental.
- Maintain and improve the satisfaction of those who utilise our services.
- Maintain and improve the satisfaction of clinicians and staff choosing to work for the Devon Doctors Group as measured by our staff and GP annual surveys.
- Maintain and improve the satisfaction of our GP Practice members as measured by our GP Practice annual survey.

### Growth & financial balance

- Support the commissioners in their wider strategic priorities specifically admissions avoidance and reductions in accident and emergency attendance both through our urgent care contracts and through new and innovative new services.
- Develop additional services aimed at supporting our member GP Practices such that they can further improve the safety and quality of care delivered to their registered patients.

## We will be a responsible organisation and support other local Devon-based charities and social enterprises which provide healthcare services and protect the environment across Devon

- Extend the scale of our out of hours GP operations by seeking to encourage PCTs which neighbour our existing OOHs provision to consider utilising our service and expertise in out of hours / urgent care provision.
- Provide additional primary and community care services which complement our mission and our strategic objectives and support our member GP practices.

### Health & wellbeing of the local population

- Give end-of-life care a particular priority within our urgent care services.
- Use our primary care services [Devon Health] to provide dedicated services to those people who do not utilise mainstream GP primary care services such as homeless, offenders and ex-offenders, those with drug addictions and young people.
- Be a responsible organisation and support other local Devon-based charities and social enterprises which provide healthcare services and protect the environment across Devon.

**Chris Wright**  
Chief Executive  
December 2012