



# Tower Hamlets: Transforming Primary Care in a Deprived Community

Tower Hamlets Primary Care Trust (PCT) invited competitive tenders to take over the management of a general practice in one of the most deprived parts of the borough. Atos Healthcare's experience of running the award-winning Canary Wharf NHS Walk-in Centre in the borough is a crucial factor when it comes to working with the PCT and local community to develop and deliver appropriate services for a very diverse patient population.

Atos ™  
Healthcare

If the policy of equitable access to healthcare is to be implemented broadly and fairly, the biggest challenges must be taken on and solved with service improvements that can be sustained in the long-term.

### **Tower Hamlets**

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has one of the most varied populations in the UK, from the prosperity of Canary Wharf to parts of the borough that have some of the highest levels of social, economic and health deprivation in the country. Like many inner-city areas, the population is becoming more diverse with increasing numbers of new entrants from other parts of the UK as well as from abroad. The projected population growth over the next ten years across the borough is 50%. There are 36 general practices within the PCT boundary with a total registered population of over 242,000 patients.

### **Local health conditions**

The area in Tower Hamlets in which the St Paul's Way Medical Centre is located exhibits many of the most pressing health issues facing inner-city PCTs, including the highest levels of smoking, obesity, overcrowding and circulatory disease in the borough. Mental health admissions are 80-90% greater than expected across England and the area also has the highest prevalence of child and adolescent disorder in the borough. Breast screening is currently 50% of national targets and cervical cancer screening stands at 90%\*. At the St Paul's Way Medical Centre there were high levels of 'Did Not Attend' for booked General Practitioner (GP) and hospital appointments.

### **The PCT's strategy**

The PCT and the London Borough have developed a joint ten year strategy for improving health and wellbeing that envisages a new model of integrated services available near people's homes. The services will be provided through a mix of NHS care, social care and services from a range of community organisations.

The overall aims of the ten year strategy are to:

- > Reduce inequalities in health and ensure equitable access to services
- > Improve the experience of service users
- > Develop better integrated, more localised services
- > Increase choice and control, promoting independence
- > Invest resources effectively.

### **The challenge**

The successful bidder for the St Paul's Way Medical Centre had to demonstrate how it would:

- > Provide core and extended GP services for both planned and urgent/unplanned care over longer opening hours and on Saturdays
- > Address health inequalities and structured long-term illness management, including call and recall processes
- > Offer a 'first contact' system providing an initial telephone consultation or walk-in service to meet requests for urgent or unscheduled appointments for registered patients
- > Keep the practice list open to accommodate growth from 11,000 up to 15,000 patients – more than any other practice in the borough.

Service provision is for ten years with a break clause option on both parties after five years. A yearly review is linked to achievement of the projected service development as well as changes in the strategic direction of the PCT.

Atos Healthcare was awarded the contract to provide the agreed primary care services for St Paul's Way Medical Centre at the end of 2007.

### **Our solution**

Following contract award, the first part of our solution was to embark upon an ambitious transition plan over the Christmas and New Year period. We took formal control of the Medical Centre from the PCT on 31 January 2008. Our transition activity covered all project streams and was controlled by an Atos Healthcare Transition Manager using PRINCE 2 project methodology. As with all our healthcare projects, we adopted an inclusive approach to the transition with representation at project meetings from the PCT management, the transferring staff at the practice and managers from Atos Healthcare.

Following the transition and handover, we set about implementing a practice transformation plan. Within one month of live running, we delivered extended opening hours, a registered patient walk-in service and telephone consultations. For practice staff, we established a re-structuring process and began a significant recruitment campaign for clinical and medical staff. While our objective was to employ the best people for the job, we also made every effort to recruit staff with knowledge of the area and local health conditions.

As part of our commitment to support employment initiatives for local people in the borough, such as the East London Business Alliance project, we were able to offer full-time employment to a young person who had previously gained work experience at our Canary Wharf NHS Walk-in Centre.

Through our Customer Relation Management plan we engage in one-to-one meetings and group briefings with local community leaders and councillors. We are also working with local community groups on a programme to display art produced by local schoolchildren in the public areas of the Medical Centre.

Our patient communication plans have resulted in Patient Participation Group meetings being re-established at the Medical Centre. These important meetings bring patients up-to-date with our plans and progress whilst also inviting their input on how service improvements can be prioritised and delivered.

### The results so far

As of May 2008, just five months into our transformation plan, the implemented changes have been significant. Key milestones include:

#### Access

- > The Centre is open to patients Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 8.00pm and Saturdays 9.00am to 5.00pm – a total of 68 hours per week, an improvement of 30%. Appointments are available throughout these opening hours
- > The patient walk-in service and telephone advice lines are operating successfully
- > Patient registrations are increasing.

#### Staffing

- > Medical and clinical staff are now employees rather than locums
- > The administrative and management re-structuring fully supports longer opening hours and improved patient services.

#### Patients and stakeholders

- > The Patient Participation Group is up and running
- > A patient satisfaction survey process has been established
- > A Local Housing Estate Board briefing has been conducted and further meetings have been arranged.

#### Governance

- > A formal site Clinical Governance (CG) review has been initiated
- > Monthly CG meetings are now taking place
- > We are implementing CG tools, reports and returns to support effective governance going forward.

#### About Atos Healthcare

Atos Healthcare, a division of Atos Origin, combines the Company's expertise in consulting, technology and healthcare to improve the way care is delivered. Services range from lean service transformation, commissioning, hosting and software development, through to disability assessments, occupational health and front line primary care. Atos Healthcare has a team of more than 2,500, of whom over 1,900 are qualified medical professionals.

#### Going forward

If you would like to know more about Atos Healthcare and our primary care experience and services, please call 020 7830 4931 or visit [atoshealthcare.com](http://atoshealthcare.com)





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