

# Stakeholder Brief

Special Edition

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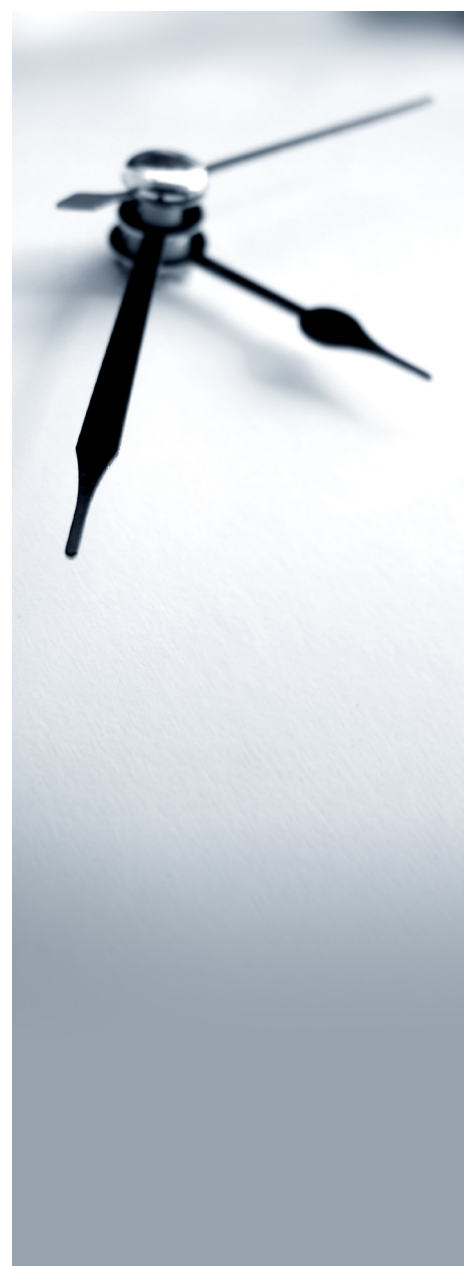
## Harmoni announced as new out of hours provider for Worcestershire

NHS Worcestershire has announced that experienced national out of hours provider Harmoni will be taking over the contract to provide out of hours services in the county, subject to finalising their proposed takeover of Take Care Now Ltd (TCN).

A five year contract for the service was previously awarded to TCN in October 2008 but TCN have been in discussions since January to transfer control of the business to an alternative out of hours provider. The transfer of the out of hours contract in Worcestershire could only be done with the full agreement of NHS Worcestershire, who have been working with local GPs over the past few weeks to review Harmoni's proposals.

**Paul Bates, Chief Executive of NHS Worcestershire, said:**

"We have been quite clear from the outset that we would only agree to the takeover if we could be sure that local GPs were confident in the type of service a new out of hours provider would offer. Experience from the last few years has shown us that it is really important that local GPs are able to shape and influence the performance of this service so it was crucial that this was a major element of whatever proposals came forward. After the due diligence process and an ongoing dialogue with GPs and other key stakeholders over the last few weeks, we are happy that we have now got arrangements in place which will put some of our senior GPs in the driving seat for taking this service forward."



The broad details of the service that Harmoni will be under contract to provide remain unchanged, although NHS Worcestershire has confirmed that some local issues will need to be examined. It has been agreed that Harmoni will increase the standard number of GPs working on the overnight shift from 2 to 3 and that a GP Management Board will be setup to monitor the quality of the service.

Harmoni is a leading provider of out of hours services and currently provide services to more than 6 million people across the country.

**Paul Bates, Chief Executive of NHS Worcestershire, said:**

“This Board will also agree a set of performance indicators and targets that measure the level of GP engagement that Harmoni will be required to achieve. These targets will have to be agreed by the Board but might include areas such as the proportion of local GPs who work in the service and GP satisfaction with the service. One of the key aspects to the Harmoni agreement is that the GP Management Board will have the right to cancel the arrangement in six months time if performance in these areas is unsatisfactory.”

**Dr Anthony Kelly, a local GP and Chair of Worcestershire’s Clinical Senate, said:**

“Local GPs have expressed concerns about the out of hours service and have rightly been closely involved in scrutinising this proposal from Harmoni and agreeing a way forward. I think it is fair to say that there are a number of my GP colleagues in the county looking for opportunities to get more involved both by providing and helping to manage the ooh service. These suggestions from Harmoni are welcome and show commitment on their behalf to work with local GPs to deliver the service to our community that as clinicians we all expect.”

**Dr Tony Snell, Medical Director of Harmoni, said:**

“We will be delighted to have the opportunity to provide primary urgent care out of hours services to patients in Worcestershire. We believe that Harmoni will be able to provide strong business management and leadership, safe systems and processes based on our experience elsewhere, and the right level of support to enable staff locally to deliver the best quality service possible for local people.”



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