

News story: NHS trusts gain more control over their property

Health Minister Stephen Hammond has announced that [new guidance on NHS property ownership](#) will allow NHS trusts and foundation trusts to apply for the transfer of ownership of properties on their estate.

This is where property on a trust's estate belongs to NHS Property Services (NHSPS) and Community Health Partnerships (CHP).

The change recognises that, in many cases, NHS trusts are best placed to judge how to use their estate to benefit the local community.

Applicant trusts will need to put forward business cases showing how owning the property will:

- help them use their overall estate more efficiently
- improve frontline services from existing buildings
- enable faster decision-making on investment in new wards or patient facilities

Applications will be subject to approval by the Department of Health and Social Care.

The department is already working with 2 trusts to assess the case for the transferring of specific properties:

- West Suffolk Foundation Trust, for Newmarket Hospital
- Dorset Healthcare Foundation Trust, for Boscombe and Springbourne Health Centre

Following NHS reforms in 2013 and the end of primary care trusts, a large number of properties were passed to NHSPS and CHP to reduce running costs and release cash for reinvestment back into the NHS through the sale of surplus assets.

The presumption that some of the property transferred to trusts in 2013 can automatically revert to NHSPS will also be removed.

NHSPS and CHP will continue to hold significant portfolios of NHS property and will continue to be expert providers of property-related services.

Health Minister Stephen Hammond said:

Our Long Term Plan for the NHS sets out how we will ensure people get the most appropriate care in the most appropriate setting, and to achieve that we need to make the best use of our NHS estate.

This change will empower trusts to make decisions based on the

needs of the local community and deliver faster improvements to frontline services for patients, all while getting the best value for money for taxpayers.

It will support trusts to invest in development and deliver the Long Term Plan ambition for more joined-up and coordinated care, backed by an extra £33.9 billion per year by 2023 to 2024 to secure the future of the health service.