



CareCapital Group: buildings progressing primary care

When considering premises suitable for today's service delivery requirements, is it time to consider something more radical? An increasing number of medical centres are developed and owned by specialist developers, such as the CareCapital Group, and leased to GPs – enabling greater patient services that benefit all



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It has been estimated that some 80% of the older medical centre building stock is inadequate – whether in terms of space, location, facilities or compliance with legislation. Added to the government's push to ensure more patients can be treated in the community, this calls for more sophisticated, purpose-built facilities, with more space and potentially greater collaboration with other healthcare providers.

CareCapital has spent the last few years closely studying evolving needs in primary care, with a view to developing specialist premises solutions to assist in this modernisation process.

Recently acquired cutting-edge facilities in Europe offer potential solutions for the future here. These facilities bring together a wide variety of healthcare services and professions under one roof, providing opportunities for mutually beneficial relationships amongst providers and offering super convenience for patients.

So, for example, a patient can see their GP, have a blood test or x-ray, visit a specialist consultant, get their teeth, eyes or feet done and have a coffee while waiting for their results!

In the past, GPs might have struggled to incorporate such a range of services on their site, due to management, space or funding limitations. However, new arrangements are now possible, which take the hassle and risk away from the GPs while offering all the synergies and support that can make these multioccupancy arrangements so successful.

For example, an urban regeneration project CareCapital is developing on the south coast incorporates a new site for an existing six-GP medical centre with many

other facilities, including a pharmacy, additional retail units and 15 storeys of accommodation and parking.

While the GPs are the anchor tenants, all the other facilities help to make it possible – and at a rent that the GPs can afford.

CareCapital takes responsibility for every aspect of the whole process, from determining how to make this possible through to delivering the completed project – and all this after an initial conversation with the doctors about helping them to upgrade their facilities!

Another example is a 2,800m² neighbourhood centre in the midlands, which will incorporate the expansion of an existing six-GP surgery, in addition to a new pharmacy, a mother and baby unit, a new community library and retail space. This is an excellent example of linking healthcare with local authority projects to create the seeds of our own health and community "malls".

Do we hear the term "polyclinic" raising its confusing head? Much has been written about this concept, but it is not always clear what is really being referred to. When Lord Darzi first talked about polyclinics in London, it seemed to be about herding GP practices into larger practices across London, with other services thrown in. Now though, PCTs often use the term to indicate that they want a health centre with a variety of services under one roof.

For practices that either choose, or are "persuaded" to cohabit with other practices, this does not mean that you have to be herded together! Through the design process, your identity and space can be

maintained, while ensuring you enjoy the benefits of new services and economies of scale.

For example, CareCapital has been appointed as the preferred bidder to develop a primary care centre in which up to four GP practices are being brought together as part of a wider primary care colocation program. The design is such that each practice will have its own separate unit while being connected to beneficial communal facilities, such as diagnostics and therapy.

What if green issues are high on your agenda? A new 1,600m² medical complex in the south west is being designed with sustainability and the environment as key drivers. The building will be fluid and contoured around trees on the site, creating individual "pod" treatment rooms with unobstructed views to the outside greenery, while maintaining privacy.

Central to these will be the communal and reception areas. The whole building is to be clad in copper that will age gradually. Other internal features will also ensure the carbon footprint is kept to a minimum. There is already interest in commissioning similar buildings for a much larger site.

Of course, not every practice wants or needs to create a multioccupancy facility or "super surgery". Sometimes you just need a larger surgery for your own needs. Whatever the situation, there are a variety of options available, but it may be that you can benefit from becoming part of a larger complementary development.

REFERENCE

1. *Department of Health. Departmental Investment Strategy. London: DH; 2000.*