

Trauma care to be maintained

TRAUMA services at Banbury's Horton General Hospital will be maintained next year in spite of a revolt by specialists, hospital bosses have promised.

Highly experienced senior orthopaedic surgeons, recalled from the privately run Ramsay Treatment Centre, have reportedly refused to be part of a new trauma service.

The three specialists have, in recent years, been shared between the Horton and the treatment centre (TC) which carries out planned operations such as hip and knee replacements on a commercial basis.

The TC is run by the Australian medical company Ramsay which was contracted until the end of the year and is Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust's preferred bidder to continue the service for the next three years.

Oxford University Hospitals Trust (the new name for the merged Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals Trust and Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre) planned the new trauma service after failing in its own bid to take over running the treatment centre.

by Roseanne Edwards

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This week, Banbury MP Tony Baldry asked trust chiefs to confirm that services will not be affected by the boycott by the three surgeons - whose secondment to the Ramsay centre ends on January 1.

"The surgeons are very unhappy as they are orthopaedic surgeons and don't want to do entirely trauma work," he told a meeting of the Community Partnership Network this week.

Mr Baldry acknowledged that the trust did not know until the end of November that it had lost its bid to take over the treatment centre contract and so could not have held detailed discussions with the surgeons before that time.

"The community needs to know - if the existing surgeons at the Horton are unable, unwilling or unprepared to fulfil the trauma requirements - what will happen?" he said.

"The community is entitled to know if trauma services will be

functioning as of January 2."

Paul Brennan, director of clinical services at the trust, said no contracts have yet been signed by Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust, which has yet to confirm the final contract winner.

He would not breach confidentiality by discussing issues relating to staff but assured Mr Baldry trauma services will be in place when secondment to the Ramsay centre ends on January 1.

It is understood the surgeons, who are all highly practised and experienced in bone surgery, do not want to be left to focus their talents on the trust's new service which will include a week-round trauma care with six-days-a-week fracture clinics and ward attendance. It would spell the end of their work as routine bone surgeons on a busy unit.

Such a service would mean the specialists, who are at advanced stages in their careers, taking on a higher proportion of night and out-of-hours work.

It is understood the British Medical Association's legal department has been involved on the surgeons' behalf.