

Dear Sirs

I write to express my concerns regarding the Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, and North Durham Draft Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP). As the Member of Parliament for South Shields my comments are to be taken as being relevant to the services within my constituency, not those of my colleagues' constituencies. I will also keep my comments brief as I have made my position clear with various senior persons from the CCG and South Tyneside District Hospital already. I would also like to add that the plan as it stands, is lengthy and technical in nature which in itself will be off putting, limiting the amount of responses that will be received.

Whilst I have always supported and always will support positive changes to our health service I remain of the view that the draft STP is in short an attempt to try and justify the largest cuts that the NHS in this area have ever been subjected to and the plans purpose is to set the stage for the implementation of a reduction in services which are used daily by my constituents.

I know the area stands to lose nearly £1 billion in funding by 2020 / 2021 whilst also being expected to deliver a sustainable and forward-thinking

approach to health. I completely understand that CCG's have been placed in an impossible position by this Government and are under intolerable pressure to carry out Government mandated cuts but I cannot support a plan when the end goal is to cut services. When any consultation is predicated with the aim of cutting services then the consultation process is stifled and any room for innovative or forward thinking approaches to the challenges that face the NHS become secondary.

Within the plan a statement reads, *"the urgent need to re-balance services across both organisations as it is no longer safe or sustainable for either organisation to duplicate the provision of services in each location"*. There are very obviously duplicated services in both South Tyneside and Sunderland hospitals but this statement taken in conjunction with other statements made by senior persons regarding South Tyneside Hospital moving to a respite and rehabilitation hospital, comments made to myself that the future of Accident and Emergency cannot be guaranteed and the lack of transparency that has surrounded developments at South Tyneside Hospital since the merger with Sunderland Hospital will cause alarm.

There are very real worries that South Tyneside will ultimately lose many of its acute services which will simply be moved to Sunderland. Having seen this happen with the Stroke Unit in South Tyneside already, I think this worry is justified and needs to be addressed rapidly. Vital services cannot simply be outed from one struggling hospital and moved to another struggling hospital. The impact this will have on communities is huge and the increased travel time could very much put lives at risk.

The ability for either hospital alone to cope with the added influx of patients also poses the question as to whether this idea of reducing duplicated services is in fact sustainable or transformative thinking. In South Tyneside alone during 2016 67,783 people used the A&E Department, in Sunderland, this figure was 140,037. If this was provided at one single unit this would mean that over 200,000 people would be treated, this would ultimately increase waiting times and in effect render the service unsuitable as well as unsustainable.

If sustainability really was at the heart of these plans then A&E care, maternity care, ICU and other acute services would remain and would be provided at the very heart of our communities for which they serve.

I feel the STP as it stands will not transform our local NHS into a safe health system the models contained within it are simply that, models, which have not been tested and are likely to not be funded adequately. As far as I am aware at this stage there has been no independent assessment of the services which are deemed “duplicated” meaning there isn't a solid evidence base to justify potential changes. To simply say a service is duplicated and indicate it may need removing, without looking at the bigger picture or the safety of patients and staff is both ill-thought out and dangerous. The STP plan for South Tyneside contains a lack of information and detail, phases of clinical reviews on key services are referred to as being already underway yet there has been no announcement made regarding when public consultation on these review outcomes will take place.

The massive projected cuts that are contained within the STP will go little way to close the gaps in health and well-being, care and quality and financial sustainability. It will actually widen these gaps. The STP also gives little explanation as to how ill health prevention services are to be used or integrated into communities.

In South Tyneside there has been a lack of transparency and accountability, clinicians and other staff have been locked out of the

debate and minutes of key meetings are not being made available to the public in the manner they always were prior to the merger. I appreciate a lot of work has gone into producing the STP but I fear the direction outlined in it may spell the end for South Tyneside Hospital and leave a big gap in service for my constituents.

Emma Lewell-Buck MP