

**REPORT ON CONSULTATION: SOUTH MOOR HOSPITAL –
THE CLOSURE OF HOLMSIDE WARD AND THE TEMPORARY
RELOCATION OF OTHER SERVICES**

Background

At its meeting in January, the Trust Board agreed to public consultation on the permanent closure of inpatient beds at South Moor Hospital.

These beds, which were used for patients experiencing delayed discharge, have been closed temporarily since August 2005. This followed the success of steps by health and social care to reduce discharge delays, and the withdrawal of funding by Durham County Council.

Closure was made on a temporary basis in case the Trust experienced increased pressure, particularly during the winter months, and needed the additional capacity. This eventuality did not arise.

It was agreed that, if permanent closure was approved, a contingency plan was required for other services, based on offering patients appointments for outpatients and X ray at alternative sites.

This was based on health and safety concerns about staff working alone in isolated areas of the hospital, and the poor condition of the estate. It would cost £0.5 million to bring South Moor up to date. This would not be a good use of resources, as the outpatient and X ray services are due to transfer into the new Stanley Health Centre in 2008. This has already been subject to consultation.

Consultation

The Trust and PCT produced a consultation leaflet which was made available in South Moor Hospital, Shotley Bridge and in GP practices.

Two public meetings were scheduled at the Lamplight Arts Centre in Stanley on 19 June. These were attended by 8 members of the public (copies of notes attached).

In addition, the PCT offered meetings to local community partnerships. A meeting was held with the Green Corridor partnership on 13 June (notes attached).

A presentation was made to Derwentside District Council Health Scrutiny panel on 14 June. The Council have raised no objection to the closure.

The Trust has received one letter from a member of the public.

Issues raised

Key issues raised were:

- *Availability of beds locally* – attendees expressed concern that the South Moor beds may be needed in future.
NHS response: In the year since the beds were closed, we have not experienced the type of pressure that would mean we would look to South Moor for additional capacity. South Moor has been used exclusively for delayed discharge patients for the last few years, a problem which Social Services has successfully dealt with.
- *Travel for local patients* – some attendees felt that patients local to South Moor should be compensated for the increased travel required for alternative services.
NHS response: We are offering patients a choice of alternative venues for outpatient and X ray services, so that they can choose where it would be most convenient for them to go. We are aware that, for some patients very close to South Moor, any change will be less convenient. One issue that was mentioned was the podiatry clinic, however this will remain locally within Craghead. It is also important to recognise that the patients who have been using the beds at South Moor in recent years, have come from across Derwentside and North Durham.
- *Future use of the site, sale proceeds and covenants*
NHS response: This consultation is not about the future use of the site, it is about the services being provided there and their future. The issues around the site need to be a separate discussion.
- *Location of Stanley Health Centre* – some attendees felt that the new Stanley Health centre should have been built at South Moor.
NHS response: The location of Stanley Health Centre was subject to long and detailed consultation before a decision was made on a more central location for the Stanley population.

Conclusions

We are very grateful to the people who spoke to us as part of the consultation. There is clearly a sadness about losing a local institution, which we understand.

However, no issues have arisen as a result of the consultation which suggest that we should revisit the decision in relation to the inpatient beds, or that we should reconsider the short term relocation of outpatient and X ray services to alternative sites, pending the opening of Stanley Health centre in 2008.

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