

STAKEHOLDER BRIEFING

NHS consultations paused due to General Election announcement

TWO public consultations into shaping the future of local hospital services have been postponed until early next year following the announcement that a General Election will take place

Residents across County Durham and Darlington had been expected to have their say on proposals to redesign in-patient rehabilitation services on Ward six and stroke rehabilitation services at Bishop Auckland Hospital at a series of public meetings scheduled to take place in November.

Due to the announcement of a UK general election on December, 12, both consultations have now been paused and will resume on January, 14, 2020.

Dr Stewart Findlay, of NHS Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgfield Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "We have taken the decision to delay both consultations due to the potential clash with the run-up to the UK general election.

"Continuing with our public events may have risked breaching "purdah" rules which prevent all public sector organisations engaging in any activity which could be deemed politically controversial.

"While we are extremely disappointed to be delaying consultation on both proposals, it is important that we do everything possible to avoid any activity that could call NHS political impartiality into question and ensure that any public resources are not used for political purposes."

Ward six at Bishop Auckland Hospital currently delivers nurse-led 'step down care' for patients who are medically well but unable to return home immediately. Proposals include turning the unit into an inpatient rehabilitation facility, offering patients dedicated therapy support to help them leave hospital sooner.

Consultation is also temporarily suspended on proposals to consolidate stroke rehabilitation services from Bishop Auckland Hospital to the University Hospital of North Durham alongside the immediate stroke unit, to ensure continuity of care for patients with staff working together on one specialist site.

All future public consultation dates will be publicised in advance in the local press, on the NHS Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS North Durham Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group websites.

Ends.