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Councillor John Robinson  
Chair of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Durham County Council  
County Hall  
Durham  
DH1 5UQ

1<sup>st</sup> December 2016

Dear Councillor Robinson

**Reconfiguration of Organic Inpatient Wards serving County Durham and Darlington**

Thank you for your letter of 14<sup>th</sup> November 2016 raising concerns regarding the implementation of the mitigation plan that was developed following the agreement to deliver all inpatient care for people with organic illnesses at Auckland Park. I have now looked into the element of the mitigation plan you refer to i.e. the provision of support where additional travel has been incurred and summarise the findings below. (Further detail is enclosed in the Appendix to this letter)

Since the closure of Picktree Ward there has been 21 patients admitted from North Durham into Auckland Park. Of these we can only identify 1 where no support was offered and there is not an appropriate reason for why this was the case. 14 patients were offered support with travel for their families/carers, of which 7 declined the offer of support. Of the 7 that were not offered support there were 6 where there was an appropriate reason for this decision. (See attached Appendix.)

I am unsure if the 1 person that was not offered the support is the person you referred to in your letter. If you could please send us the detail we can check this and feed back to you further. Clearly we are disappointed that not all patients families/carer have been offered support as per the mitigation plan however I believe the fact that there has only been 1 that hasn't reflects that the process was new for the staff and was being embedded (rather than there not being a mitigation plan or that that mitigation plan is not being implemented). Indeed as we have been implementing the mitigation plan we have identified some parts of the process that could be improved further in order to ensure the support is offered in a timely way and the ward managers have introduced a live audit tool to ensure this is the case.

As I reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when presenting the results of the consultation the Trust Board were very aware of the impact that the decision would have on patients and their families and were committed to implementing a mitigation plan that would reduce that impact as far as possible. Therefore we remain committed to ensuring that the mitigation plan is implemented and as planned will bring a report to the Committee to demonstrate this further. I hope the information provided in this letter and the Appendix gives you assurance that we are implementing the agreed action plan.

I look forward to receiving the details of the specific case you refer to.

Kind regards.

**Sharon Pickering**  
**Director of Planning, Performance and Communications**

Cc: Nicola Bailey, Chief Operating Officer North Durham and DDES CCGs  
Stewart Findlay, Chief Officer, DDES CCG  
Patrick Scott, Director of Operations, D&D Locality, TEWV NHSFT

## Appendix 1

### Admissions to Auckland Park from North Durham CCG and Implementation of Offering Travel Support

Total Number of patients admitted from North Durham	21
Total Number offered travel support	14
Total Number offered who declined support	7*

Of the 7 who took up the offer of support:

- 4 asked for support with taxis (77 journeys have been paid for)
- 2 asked for support for car mileage and we gave out 2 claim forms (1 claim for not yet submitted)\*\*
- 1 asked for support with train cost and was given a claim form (claim form has not been submitted)
- No claims have been refused

\*1 relative initially declined but we revisited this with him and he is now receiving taxi support. This promoted a further relative claim who had originally declined

\*\*We provide support to carers to complete the form where required.

Of the 7 who were **not** offered travel support the following provides the rational:

Transferred to acute hospital within 24 hours of admission	1
Patient & family live closer to Auckland Park than Lanchester Rd	1
No family contact	2
No local family/carers/visitors	2
No rational known	1