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Penelope Gray,
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17 April 2018

Dear Ms. Gray,

NHS England Review of Specialised Vascular Services in North East England

At a meeting of the County Council's Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Friday 13 April 2018, consideration was given to a report regarding proposals by NHS England to reconfigure specialised and some non-specialised vascular services in North East England.

Whilst members noted that representatives of NHS England's specialised commissioning team could not attend the meeting due to election purdah regulations, the Committee have raised a number of concerns in respect of the proposals which they wanted to communicate to NHS England prior to the proposed special meeting of the Council's Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 1 June 2018.

Having considered the briefing note prepared by the regional commissioning team for consideration at the meeting, members noted the proposed change from 4 to 3 specialised vascular centres with the recommended centres being the Freeman Hospital, Newcastle upon Tyne, James Cook Hospital, Middlesbrough and Sunderland Royal Hospital.

Notwithstanding the fact that the proposals are to be the subject of detailed discussion at the meeting on 1 June 2018, members of the Committee wanted to place on record their concerns in respect of the proposals, not least of which remains the stated rationale for the third centre being Sunderland Royal Hospital rather than University Hospital North Durham.

Members

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The briefing paper to members states that:-

- i. Sunderland Royal Hospital is recommended as the third vascular centre: it is geographically located in the centre of the region in between the two major trauma centres in Newcastle and Middlesbrough;
- ii. it has the physical infrastructure already in place for it to become the third vascular centre with a new emergency department, state-of-the-art imaging hub (key for interventional radiology) and an intensive care unit with sufficient bed capacity;
- iii. there are more consultant interventional radiologists working at Sunderland Royal Hospital which is a critical part of the vascular services workforce and adds greater resilience for a centralised service;
- iv. it provides a number of related speciality services and has established cross speciality working in cardiology, renal, stroke and care of the elderly – services which can form part of the care needed by vascular patients.

The Committee has concerns at the reference to Sunderland Royal Hospital being geographically located in the centre of the region as a criteria for selection given that UHND is equally equidistant to Newcastle and Middlesbrough. Members also have serious concerns at the approach that appears to be being adopted to centralise all major acute service provision at hospitals within Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesbrough to the detriment of all other acute hospitals across the region, not least UHND.

Members of the Committee also wish to examine the “substantial clinical evidence” quoted in the briefing that led to the selection of Sunderland Royal Hospital over UNHD including details of specialised vascular services casework undertaken across the region and specifically the comparisons between Sunderland Royal hospital and UHND.

As Chairman of the Committee I would therefore ask that the information requested herein is provided to members at the special meeting of the County Council’s Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 1 June 2018 and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Cllr John Robinson
Chair of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Durham County Council