

RISHI SUNAK MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Colin Martin
CEO, Tyne, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
West Park Hospital
Edward Pease Way
Darlington
DL2 2TS

Our Ref: ZA14922

18 July 2017

Dear Colin,

Thank you for your time earlier today. I appreciated the open dialogue and constructive approach.

As I am sure you can appreciate, my constituents have understandable concerns about further healthcare services being lost from the Friarage Hospital. The proposed changes to inpatient Mental Health capabilities come on the back of maternity and paediatric services that have already been lost, and ongoing concerns relating to critical care.

Further to our discussion, my thoughts are outlined below and I would be grateful for your detailed response.

(1) CONFIRMATION OF POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES FROM THE CHANGES SO WE CAN HOLD THE TRUST AND CCG ACCOUNTABLE IN THE FUTURE

In previous rounds of consultations, we are often told certain things about the future to make us comfortable with the changes being proposed. For example, when the Friarage maternity services were downgraded people were assured that they could rely on Darlington Hospital. Just a couple of years later, we now find ourselves in the situation where Darlington Hospital's maternity unit is under threat. Clearly, if the facts down the line change, then the basis for making the original decision to downgrade the Friarage's maternity services was flawed and based on at best incorrect or at worst misleading information. I am keen to ensure no such similar situation occurs here.

Please can you confirm the specific increase in staffing and resources for Community Mental Health teams which will occur as a result of these changes?

Practically, what does this mean in terms of hours/days/sessions of extra community mental health capacity for our area? It would be helpful to have a clear outline of what is available today and the proposal for the future.

What are current waiting times for assessment by community teams and what is the Trust's estimate of what these will be in the future (presumably better)?

What are the increased specialist therapies that will be available to local patients and how can we quantify and monitor this increase?

One of the proposed benefits is reduced hospital admissions. Please can you provide data on current and historic admission rates and what the estimated future admission rates will be in the new model? What is the statistical evidence basis for the estimated reduction?

Please can you quantify the extra investment that will go into creating a new mental health community resource centre in Northallerton to replace Gibraltar House? What are the specific benefits of this new centre for the community?

(2) UNDERSTANDING OF THE TIMING BETWEEN LOSING THE INPATIENT WARDS AND SEEING THE BENEFITS ELSEWHERE

It would be reassuring for my constituents to know there will be no gap between the losing inpatient wards and seeing the benefits of increased investment in community mental health. The negative consequences of losing these wards are felt day one, so it is only right that the benefits of the new configuration are also experienced day one. It would not be acceptable to have any meaningful delay.

I understand that NHS England guidelines make clear that any proposals for bed closures “must demonstrate that sufficient alternative provision, such as increased GP or community services, is being put in place alongside of or ahead of bed closures, and that the new workforce will be there to deliver it.”

Please can you provide a detailed timeline of the sequencing of the various changes that are being proposed?

(3) IS THERE ENOUGH CAPACITY AT WEST PARK (DARLINGTON) AND ROSEBERRY PARK (MIDDLESBROUGH)?

In the past when local services at the Friarage have gone, my constituents are inconvenienced by having to travel further to other healthcare institutions, like the James Cook. What is worse than this though is when they find that the new institution they are travelling further to does not actually have the capacity to see them. This clearly is unacceptable and brings into question the original rationale for moving services in the first place. Again, I am keen to avoid a similar situation here.

Please can you provide a breakdown of the current number of Mental Health inpatient beds at the Friarage? What is their utilisation? In general, how should we think about existing demand for these services?

Please could you outline the current capacity at both Darlington and Middlesbrough to deal with these patients? Is there sufficient spare capacity at these sites so that my constituents will not suffer any lack of access to inpatient services?

Furthermore, it seems the quality of the current physical inpatient facilities at both sites is superior to those at the Friarage? Is this the case and why specifically?

Are there any changes to health care provisioning that may occur in the medium term at either site that would impact the capacity we are relying on to accommodate our patients?

(4) DO YOU FEEL MOVING MENTAL HEALTH PATIENTS THIS FAR AWAY FROM THEIR HOME COMMUNITY IS APPROPRIATE?

I am led to believe that the Department of Health has guidelines on what is considered an inappropriate “out of area placement”. Indeed, the guidelines emphasise that “placements should be in a location that helps people to retain the contact they want to maintain with their family, carers and friends, and to feel as familiar as possible with the local environment”.

Furthermore, overall Government ambition is for the number of out of area placements to diminish rather than increase as more care happens closer to home.

Do you believe the proposed changes meet the criteria outlined?

(5) TRAVEL TIMES FOR THOSE AFFECTED

The clear disadvantage of the proposals is the increased travel times for certain of my constituents. In a sparse, rural area with limited public transportation and an elderly population, this is of particular concern to me and the community.

Please could you outline in detail the modelling you have done to estimate the number of people affected and the degree to which they will be affected in terms of additional distance?

Thank you again for your time and I appreciate you taking into account my concerns and questions. I look forward to receiving your response and hope we can maintain a good dialogue going forward.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rishi Sunak', written in a cursive style.

Rishi Sunak
Member of Parliament
Richmond (Yorks)