



North Tyneside LINK

**Response to the NHS North of Tyne's
Consultation on Northumbria Healthcare NHS
Foundation Trust's Proposed Plans for a
Specialist Emergency Care Hospital**

24th July 2009

1. Introduction

In March North Tyneside LINK invited LINK members and members of the public to attend two meetings to discuss the NHS plans for a new specialist emergency care hospital, which forms part of Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's urgent care strategy.

The aim of the events was to learn more about the NHS plans and to gather views and concerns. This information has been compiled and formed the basis of North Tyneside LINK's response to Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's pre consultation plans. Since the report was sent to Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust in March, LINK has had further dialogue with the Trust in order to clarify some of the areas of concern raised by LINK members.

This report, LINK's formal response to NHS North of Tyne's consultation on the proposed specialist emergency care hospital, has been updated from the March report to take account of replies that LINK has had from Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. Contained within this report is a formal request for a response from NHS North of Tyne to outstanding areas of concern.

2. Summary of Findings

North Tyneside LINK welcomes the plans for the proposed emergency care hospital. LINK can see that the new hospital could offer better care to residents of North Tyneside by concentrating specialists in one location, which will allow rapid access to treatment. The centralisation of equipment and specialist services should lead to earlier diagnosis as well as improved triage and patient planning. LINK also welcomes the proposed better use of the 'golden hour' and the fact that these plans appear to be medically led and address strategic needs. The proposed location for the new hospital also appears appropriate given its proximity to major access routes.

We also welcome Northumbria Trust's recognition that the development of the new hospital will allow some changes, and improvements, to be made to services at Rake Lane. Our understanding is that the Trust propose improvements that will include reduced waiting times for walk in accident and emergency patients and that for patients with planned MRI scans there should be reduced disruption as emergency cases will receive scans at the new hospital and therefore will not 'queue jump' at district hospitals. We considered the changes that we would like to see at Rake Lane and these are set out in section 7.

Despite this overall welcome to the Trust's plans the LINK does have some concerns and questions relating to the new plans. We made a formal request to the Trust for responses to a number of questions (5.1 – 5.7), which we received in April. A set of follow up questions for more specific information on several issues was sent to Northumbria in June and again we received a response well within the 20 days

statutory regulation. These responses from the Trust are also considered in sections 5.1-5.7.

We also considered a range of issues that we see as important for the success of the new hospital and these are set out in section 6.

Having considered the Trust's responses, LINK remains uncertain of the responses to the following issues;

- Staff – LINK would still like to see specific commitments in terms of the number of additional clinical staff it intends to employ to serve the new hospital and Rake Lane. A breakdown of the additional staff proposed is needed. (See 5.2)
- Public transport – LINK appreciates that any changes in public transport cannot be guaranteed by the Trust as these decisions ultimately lie with NEXUS. However, easy and reliable 24 hour access to the proposed hospital for families and carers is a high priority for the community. (See 5.3).
- Clinical outcomes/value for money – although it is clear that these medically driven proposals hold the prospect of improvement in care through earlier access to specialist care, it remains unclear what outcome measures will be used by commissioners to assess whether the £200 million capital investment and the £5 million additional revenue costs represents good value for money (See 5.6).
- Maternity Services – LINK would like to see a more thorough consultation on proposals to change maternity services. (See 5.8).
- Ambulance Service – LINK would like assurances that ambulance crews will know which emergency centre to take patients based on initial assessments and that there has been sufficient dialogue with the ambulance service.
- LINK remains concerned that the Trust has not resolved issues concerning the handling of patients with a co-morbidity of a mental health illness – it is unclear how Northumberland Tyne and Wear Trust will cover existing A&E sites and the new hospital.

LINK would like further clarification on these points and is therefore making a formal request for this from NHS North of Tyne to respond within the statutory 20 day timeframe.

3. Background

'A New Direction of Travel for Urgent Healthcare in Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland 2008-2013 Strategy' was published by NHS North of Tyne in November 2008. The document proposes several developments in urgent care in the North of Tyne area. This report focuses on the proposal for a new emergency care hospital.

‘Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has indicated it would like to develop a major injury/illness centre, possibly in Cramlington. The proposed facility will have a full range of trauma and medical specialities, including coronary care and intensive care beds ‘.

One of the aims of North Tyneside LINK is to give its members the opportunity to comment on health and social care services, and to influence any plans for changes in services. In this instance, LINK has been able to work with Northumbria Trust to offer joint Trust/LINK events to inform LINK members and the public of these plans and to gather comments and suggestions regarding the plans.

4. Events

At our meetings in March, attendees received a presentation from Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust outlining the plans for the new hospital, with the opportunity to put questions to the Director of Emergency Care and the Medical Director of the Trust.

In small groups attendees were able to express their views on these plans. They were also asked to consider how they would like North Tyneside General Hospital (Rake Lane) to change in the light of new investment and the change in services.

30 LINK members attended the two events and subsequent public meetings and a summary of their comments, concerns, questions and suggestions is contained in this report.

5. Concerns and Questions

5.1 Services at Rake Lane

There is a concern about the impact that the new hospital could have on services offered at Rake Lane. LINK has sought assurances about the impact of the new hospital on services currently available at Rake Lane and feel that a comparison of the position Rake Lane is in currently, and the position it will be in once the proposed hospital opens would be useful.

The Trust has told us that the majority of patient contacts will continue to be at Rake Lane. Although around 25,000 people who receive their emergency care at North Tyneside will have their initial treatment at the new hospital, there will be nearly 40,000 people who continue to receive treatment at North Tyneside. For the majority of services at Rake Lane there will be no change, it will continue to provide planned treatment, tests, operations, beds for patients returning from the new hospital, cancer treatment, diagnostic tests, scans and procedures, and walk in services.

5.2 Staffing

Our understanding from the presentations was that an unspecified number of new staff would be employed within the Trust and that new, and more efficient, ways of working would mean that there would be no staff reductions at Rake Lane. However, the LINK would like further information about the workings that the Trust used to come to this conclusion. We would like to see figures that would illustrate both the before and after position at Rake Lane. These figures would need to show the average numbers of medical and nursing staff in each speciality that would be available at Rake Lane on a typical day. The concern of the LINK is two fold. Firstly, that emergencies will still happen at Rake Lane and that there may not be a sufficient level of specialist staff to manage these situations. And secondly, that staffing levels for services that will remain at Rake Lane may be reduced.

There is also a further concern that, if there were fewer skilled consultants and specialist nurses at Rake Lane as a result of the new hospital, there could be an impact on the training of both nurses and junior doctors. LINK is interested to know what plans Northumbria Trust might have to mitigate this possible problem.

The Trust has told us that the specialists will continue to be based at North Tyneside and Wansbeck Hospitals. They will undertake their on-call duty at the new hospital 1 week every couple of months. As such, the majority of their time will be based at North Tyneside providing in-patient, outpatient and diagnostic care to patients in their local hospital.

LINK members raised an additional concern about the team consultants work in, whether the whole team would move between hospitals and who would care for their patients whilst they are at the new facility? The Trust has told us that it expects that there will be a largely permanent team at the new facility to avoid disruption. Staff are being consulted about whether they would like to rotate between sites, but this is not likely to happen on a frequent basis to ensure defined teams at the new hospital.

Arrangements for looking after patient's whilst their consultants are at the new hospital will be the same as current arrangements for when consultants are on call; with a specialist colleague responsible for the patients.

The Trust assured us that when consultants are working at the new hospital they will not be expected to move between hospitals.

The current staff:patients ratios at North Tyneside will not reduce after the new hospital is opened and the training of junior doctors will be improved, they will receive training at both the new hospital and the existing hospitals and will receive more supervision.

LINK members raised particular concerns about nurses at Rake Lane. The Trust has told us that a recent benchmarking exercise with other

Trusts recently showed that Rake Lane had comparable ward staffing levels. In 2007/8 the Trust invested just over £1million in additional ward staffing and is investing a further £0.5million in 2009/10. In 2008/9 £0.5million was also invested in matrons. The Trust has given assurance that staffing levels in relation to the number of patients treated will not reduce below the level they are currently at. LINK assumes that commissioners will reflect such issues in contracts with the Trust.

5.3 Transport and parking

Transport to the new hospital site is a significant concern for LINK members who want to know if the hospital will be accessible for families and carers. LINK would like to see a plan of how transport services to the hospital will work and for the Trust to guarantee the public that these services will be up and running on the day the proposed hospital opens. Members would like to know whether the Trust has estimates of numbers of the public arriving at the hospital by car or on public transport. Congestion created on the Moor Farm roundabout as a result of the proposed hospital and parking facilities were also issues raised by LINK members. Members are keen to see that NEXUS, private contractors and the local authorities are involved early on in the planning process.

As the exact site of the new hospital is not confirmed, no guarantees can be given at this stage regarding public transport.

However, any congestion issues will be considered in the planning application. The Trust is in discussions with the local authorities and transport providers, but at this stage cannot guarantee public transport access. The Trust has told us that it is working with NEXUS to map existing services and those that could be potential adjusted. Shuttle services to interchanges at Northumberland Park and Four Lane Ends have been suggested.

The Trust's Board wishes to make car parking free, but this will be subject to an impact assessment.

5.4 Finance

LINK would like to be reassured that Rake Lane hospital will not suffer as a result of financing the new hospital, and in particular that funding will be available to make some improvements to services at Rake Lane. We would like to know the overall sum available to the Trust, as a result of the proposal, to fund these improvements.

We are not clear that the £5 million pounds revenue cost includes provision for reusing vacated facilities at Rake Lane. We are also not clear as to how the Trust will be able to make the additional 5 million pounds revenue available in future years without recourse to its primary care funders. These concerns seem to be especially pertinent if the new hospital does not attract a substantial net increase in the numbers of patients treated by the Trust.

The Trust has told us that “North Tyneside will not suffer as a consequence of the new hospital. The (capital) cost of the new specialist emergency hospital is funded in the main by a loan from the Department of Health, and as such represents “new” money into the area. It does not “divert” resources away from the investment programme at North Tyneside.

This £5 million will be deployed to reuse space to create more room around beds and additional bathroom and toilet facilities.

The additional £5m was already contained in the Trust’s long term financial plan. Each year the Trust had planned to invest a minimum of an additional £1m in quality. “This is generated through us using the resources we receive in an effective manner, and through the tariff uplift which we receive each year.”

The NHS North of Tyne Consultation Document tells us that: Northumbria NHS Trust will spend £200 million over 10 years, including £75 million on the new hospital. £60 million of this will be borrowed from a special fund for NHS foundation trusts. These proposals will not result in additional acute care costs for NHS North of Tyne.

5.5 Out of hours care

We are interested in the rationale behind the proposal that consultants in the hospital will work 8am-10pm and be on call at other times. LINK would like more assurance that patients taken to the emergency hospital will have 24 hour access to appropriate specialists.

The Trust has told us that the majority of patients who require emergency assessment and admission present in between the hours of 8am and 10pm. As such the Trust has targeted the resident (on-site) availability of specialists during this period. Outside of this time, there will be a resident A&E consultant and a range of other doctors present in the hospital to treat patients who do present between 10pm and 8am.

The Trust also tells us that very few (if any) hospitals currently have an A&E Consultant present at the hospital 24/7 and this will be one of the first in the country to provide this level of cover and the standard of care that goes with it.

5.6 Performance

LINK members would like the Trust to demonstrate how its current performance (compared with national benchmarks) will be improved in terms of reduced morbidity and hospital lengths of stay, as a result of the proposed emergency facility.

The Trust has told us that it already has a low Hospital Standardised Mortality Rate (HMSR). It expects the proposals to help to reduce this further (*“Our clinicians are clear that there are significant benefits in*

terms of survival and receiving the most up to date treatment that result from being treated by a specialist.”), but has not yet placed a figure or timescale on this perceived benefit.

In terms of length of stay, the Trust expects that on average length of stay will be reduced by approximately 1 day. This is because people will be seen much earlier by a specialist and will have more of their care delivered by senior, trained doctors.

5.7 Movements between the new centre and Rake Lane

Concerns were raised about what happens if a patient needs to stay in the new centre for longer than 3 days. Will they be transferred to Rake Lane if their bed in the new centre is needed by another patient? This reflects wider concerns about availability of beds and moving patients from one hospital to another.

The Trust has assured us that patients will only be transferred back to North Tyneside when medically fit for transfer. Patients will stay in the new hospital as long as they need to.

5.8 Maternity services

During the three month consultation led by NHS North of Tyne, comments have been sought on possible changes to maternity services. LINK members wanted to know more about the process for consulting on these changes.

The Trust has told us that the hospital consultation questionnaire includes specific questions about maternity services. North of Tyne NHS is also holding focus groups with Surestart to get more in depth views on maternity services.

Reflecting the depth of the discussion preceding the recent changes to maternity services in North Tyneside, LINK members are concerned about the way in which the important issues of medical led and midwifery led care have been subsumed within the wider emergency care hospital debate. Although the focus has been on the future of the unit at Wansbeck hospital, the potential closure of the Rake Lane facility should not be considered without a more public assessment of its performance as a midwifery led unit.

6. Suggestions

LINK members have also made suggestions for ensuring that the proposed hospital is a success.

6.1 Transport - it has been suggested that a slip road at the Moor Farm roundabout could improve access to the proposed site. Good and free parking would also positively impact patients, families and carers accessing the hospital.

- 6.2 Public education** – LINK believes that public education about the new hospital will be of vital importance. The public will need to know which services they can access at their local hospital and when going to the new hospital is more appropriate.
- 6.3 Families and Carers** – LINK would like to see excellent facilities for patient’s families and carers. This includes over night stay beds, comfortable day rooms and dining facilities that are separate from staff areas.
- 6.4 Communication** – Good communication between staff at the emergency hospital and the local hospitals is vital, as well as staff communicating with patients, families and carers to ensure everyone involved in a patient’s care is kept informed.
- 6.5 Sustainability** – If local firms and services are employed by the hospital this could improve the sustainability of the local area.
- 6.6 Access** – the hospital needs to be accessible by the Air Ambulance and plans should include a helipad.

7. Suggestions for Investment at Rake Lane

One clear theme of the consultation to date has been that the development of the new centre allows some space, and budget, for improvements that could be made to Rake Lane. To test out the views of LINK members we asked them to tell us what changes would they like to see at Rake Lane. In changes that are proposed for Rake Lane the LINK would want to see the Trust ensuring that there is an appropriate level of consultation with all stakeholders

We have split the responses into 9 categories and provide a taste of the issues that were raised under each category. The overall view is that investment needs to be provided to improve existing services before introducing new services.

7.1 Improvements in housekeeping, especially in cleanliness

Suggestions included going back to the practice of keeping one ward empty to allow other wards to ‘move in’ whilst their ‘home’ is deep cleaned. There were general concerns about the need to maintain cleanliness and reduce infection as well as the need to increase the budget for refurbishing wards. The other housekeeping issue raised was the need to keep driving food standards up and making sure that patient’s choices in terms of menus are both real, respected and that better attention is paid to their nutritional needs.

Northumbria Trust has assured LINK that there will be significant investment to upgrade the ward environment.

7.2 Improved communications

A number of participants at the meetings organised by LINK raised concerns about poor communications between professionals and also between professionals and patients/carers.

Northumbria Trust has told LINK that this is one of the 'essence of care' benchmarks that Northumbria will be using this year so that they can start to identify areas for improvement.

7.3 Better staffing

General concerns were raised about staff patient ratios, in particular in relation to geriatric care, and the need to ensure that all staff had the required basic skills. Suggestions were made about the need to use 'auxiliary' staff that could do basic nursing care and offer more time to patients. Participants felt that staff should be 'on call' to do, for example, MRI scans out of hours.

Northumbria Trust has told LINK that it is currently developing the "Professional Profiles project" which is being led by the Modern Matron for practice development. This project is about defining the skills and training that people should have in specific areas and then mapping what each member of staff has and then developing a plan to address any gaps.

7.4 Access issues

Better public transport links to the west from Rake Lane could be provided as well as more and possibly free parking.

Northumbria Trust will try to start a piece of work looking specifically at public transport access to feed into the discussion with the local authorities.

7.5 More attention to patient comfort

Patient comfort could be improved if waiting times were reduced and staff not spread so thinly. The end to mixed wards and mixed facilities is a must and the introduction of smaller wards with en-suite facilities would be welcomed. Attention also needs to be given to better confidentiality for patients.

The Trust has told us that the introduction of smaller wards with better toilet and bathroom facilities will improve privacy and dignity and this forms part of the proposals.

7.6 Better facilities for visitors

There is a need for better facilities for relatives that would include over night facilities and a family lounge. The lounge should include social space for families and relatives and a space where people can discuss things in private.

Northumbria Trust understands the point about facilities for relatives and will look to undertake a piece of work to assess how feasible it is to incorporate this into the investment plans at North Tyneside.

7.7 Changes to discharge systems

Discharge systems could be improved if pharmacy services worked better and speedier discharge on the day could be introduced.

The impact of pharmacy in the discharge process was also highlighted in the discharge from hospital report that LINK produced, and is an area that the Trust will look to start to address this year.

7.8 Efficiency savings

There is a clear need to improve the flow of patients through the out patient department. Computerised systems should allow faster check in and allow better confidentiality and should allow better co-ordination of services for patients with multiple conditions or whose care was spread across a number of trusts, hospitals or departments.

7.9 New or improved services

Gaps in current provision included the need for more psychiatric care, a resource centre that included a dedicated area for help and information services, a walk in department for arthritis care, the reinstatement of hydrotherapy pool, an improved fracture clinic and an eye clinic that could allow basic checks and follow ups without the need to go to Newcastle.

There is also an expectation that efficiency savings generated as a result of the new facility should be invested back into local district hospitals to improve patient care.

The Trust has acknowledged that there is a big piece of work to do about improving the outpatient experience and have it in its annual plan as a key Trust priority. A project group has been formed to take forward this work, and one of the key things is to understand how patients feel about the current service.

The Trust has launched a project to look at the feasibility of providing an information centre at North Tyneside, as part of a refurbishment of the main entrance, which LINK members have been actively involved in.

Other points on service improvements as Rake Lane suggested by LINK members have been noted and Northumbria Trust will give further consideration to them. The Trust also recognises a need for improved services for older people with mental health problems, in particular in respect of dementia services, a subject currently under review by North of Tyne NHS.

LINK would like to thank Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust for its open and active dialogue throughout the period of pre consultation and consultation.



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