

Issued: 18th Nov 2015

An open letter from Cumbria's Health Leaders

We very much understand that our patients, staff, and the public have ongoing concerns about the future of hospital services available for people who live in west Cumbria. We know people are worried that more services may be moved from the West Cumberland Hospital, Whitehaven to the Cumberland Infirmary Carlisle, and that concerns have also been expressed about some current services. We would like to take this opportunity to provide some reassurances about our plans to ensure safe, high quality, and deliverable services for the future.

By the spring of 2016 we will develop a clear Clinical Strategy setting out a plan for local services. This is being done as part of our involvement in the Success Regime, a new national initiative to provide support to the most challenged health economies in England. In June 2015 Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of NHS England, announced that North Cumbria was one of three areas in England that would be part of the Success Regime. This recognised that there are long term and deep rooted challenges in providing clinically and operationally sustainable, high quality and affordable health care in our area. The Success Regime is looking at all elements of health care including General Practice, Social Care, Community and Hospital services.

In developing this plan, we fully recognise the strength of feeling of many members of the public, our staff, and our patients about the future of local services in west Cumbria. There are important commitments that we can now make:

- 1) We are all fully committed to the continued delivery of the 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, Accident and Emergency service at West Cumberland Hospital. This is non-negotiable. It is also a very significant challenge, and will require all of our organisations to work together to find improved ways of working to solve the operational and workforce problems in the hospital.
- 2) There are no plans for further changes to any of the clinical services currently provided at West Cumberland Hospital until the Clinical Strategy has been developed in Spring 2016.
- 3) Should the Clinical Strategy include any proposals for major service change, including moving services from the West Cumberland Hospital to the Cumberland Infirmary, these would be subject to full public consultation.

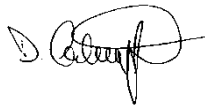
The Clinical Strategy is being developed by local clinicians, with expert support from a wide range of highly skilled professionals. To be successful, it needs to reflect best practice and the highest standards in health care tailored to the very specific needs

and challenges of our area, and as much as possible, the needs and wishes of local communities. However, we will not compromise on the quality of care. We know that there is no 'off the shelf' model that fits this area but we must try to deliver a strategy that not only works for the local population, but one that provides quality outcomes and safe services for a sustainable future. We know that keeping the status quo or going back to how things used to be is not an option.

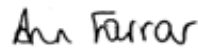
As part of the Success Regime, we have already given our commitment to run a substantial public engagement exercise which will include a range of ways that people can give their views and help shape emerging proposals in the coming months. This will build on what we already know, but will help make sure that our Clinical Strategy can be properly informed by local people.

We know our staff are incredibly committed, and work very hard every day to deliver the best, most compassionate health care they possibly can. We are writing to the NHS staff in north Cumbria to request that any member of staff concerned about any aspect of patient safety reports this, so that we can learn from any mistakes that may have been made. Protecting patients is our first and most important duty, and we will continue to improve our services to ensure the population can access the highest possible healthcare now and in the future.

Yours sincerely,



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Service NHS Trust



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