

9th December 2012

Dear Jeremy

NHS in South East London

As you will know, there are two on-going reviews affecting health services in South East London.

First, the Trust Special Administrator (TSA) appointed to review South London Healthcare NHS Trust has now made a number of draft recommendations. Separately, King's Health Partners merger plans are also progressing at the same time.

I have concerns that the piecemeal fashion in which these reviews are being conducted is causing confusion, and some of the specific proposals are destabilising services and damaging staff morale.

My purpose in writing is to ask you to intervene urgently to bring clarity to the situation and to construct a process that both considers issues in the round across the whole of South East London and builds confidence within the communities affected.

South London Healthcare NHS Trust - Trust Special Administrator Review

We accept the need for changes at the Trust and there are several good recommendations in the Draft Report of the TSA.

It builds on the Picture of Health review agreed under the last Government, but which was stalled by your predecessor. To improve the financial position in the short term many of the Picture of Health proposals could be implemented, and we would support that.

However, we cannot accept the inclusion of recommendations affecting the reconfiguration of services at Lewisham Hospital within the TSA Report and believe the consultation on these should be stopped immediately.

Lewisham Hospital is outside the purview of the TSA terms of reference and I am clear that the powers associated with the Failure Regime policy were not intended to be used to encompass service changes in other hospitals and allow back-door reconfigurations of services without proper public consultation.

I believe that consideration of services at Lewisham Hospital, as part of the TSA review breaks an important principle. The 2009 Health Act, paragraph 65F 'Draft Report' clearly states:

*"(1) Within the period of 45 working days beginning with the day on which a trust special administrator's appointment takes effect, the administrator must provide to the Secretary of State and publish a draft report stating the action which the administrator recommends the Secretary of State should take in **relation to the trust.**"*

It is clear that the inclusion of proposals for service changes at Lewisham Hospital within the TSA report is in breach of the provisions above and therefore should be stopped.

King's Health Partners merger plans

At the same time as the TSA has been reviewing services at South London Healthcare NHS Trust, plans for changes to management structures and the merger of services has been progressing, led by King's Health Partners and the three Foundation Trusts (King's College Hospital; Guy's and St Thomas' and the South London and Maudsley), in conjunction with King's College London.

These plans should be paused until the implications of the TSA final report and recommendations can be fully considered and a strategic review of health services across South East London established.

These merger plans will affect the health economy across South East London and potentially limit other longer-term options. I believe it is vital that these plans do not proceed in isolation from the wider consideration of issues in South East London.

In conclusion, I believe this situation requires a two-stage solution.

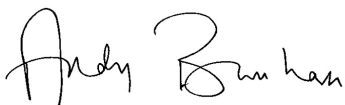
The first stage should deliver the speedy implementation of the Picture of Health recommendations together with the acceptable proposals in the TSA Draft Report. This will enable issues of sustainability to be addressed and for the Trust to move forward with a degree of certainty.

All issues and proposals relating to the reconfiguration of services at Lewisham Hospital must be removed from the TSA report as part of this stage.

Stage two should comprise a full strategic review of the sustainability of services across South East London encompassing the King's Health Partners merger plans and any service change proposals for Lewisham and the hospitals in the South London Trust.

This staged approach will allow progress to be made on the key issues for South London Healthcare NHS Trust and enable any reconfiguration proposals to be subject to proper scrutiny and considered in the context of the sustainability of the whole South East London health economy.

Best wishes



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RT HON ANDY BURNHAM MP

SHADOW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH