



# Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group

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Mr I Kitt & Ms S Morgan  
Joint Interim Chairs Healthwatch North Tyneside  
The Parks Sports Centre  
Howdon Road  
North Shields  
NE29 6TL

Dear Ian and Sokhjinder,

Thank you for your letter dated April 2018 where you express deep concerns about a story you have read in the Health Service Journal and what this might mean for our ambitions for the region's NHS to deliver the NHS Five Year Forward View.

I hope this response will address the concerns you have and clear any misconceptions there are about the issues your letter highlights. However, if it does not I am more than happy to talk to you about them.

You will recall when Alan Foster, Alison Slater and I met with North East Health Watch leaders on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017 in Hartlepool, we discussed how as a region, NHS organisations were looking to bring the three sustainability and transformation partnerships (STPs), for the North East and North Cumbria together, and work towards becoming an integrated care system.

We discussed that what had become clearer in the 18 months since the three STPs in the North East and North Cumbria were first discussed with local people, was the unique nature of the NHS across our region and that this was leading us to think about bringing the three STPs together.

This is particularly so in relation to patient flows (how and where patients use services), clinical networks (how we share clinical expertise), and in relation to the strong partnerships that have been in place for many years across the region.



This put us in a different position when thinking about how STPs could deliver the positive changes we need for our patients and how planning for those changes would benefit from taking place across the three existing STP footprints.

At that meeting we shared with you the strategic direction we hoped to take, and that we were sharing it with you well in advance of more formal discussions.

We agreed we would ensure that we would communicate any key developments to health watch partners prior to any announcement. This remains our intention and it is included in our communications and engagement planning.

Notwithstanding the advance discussions that we had with you and other partners, in order for the region's NHS statutory organisations to support the idea of working towards the three STPs coming together, and the notion of an integrated care system, we must first ask each NHS governing body and board to consider the issues and agree their support for this way of working.

This is a critical part of our governance process, which must be carried out before we can progress and before we can then formally communicate that with external partners. The process to gain that board agreement continues and has been going on now for a number of months.

Noting that position, the HSJ article that you have read was not the result of any formal announcement that we have proactively made, but was as a direct result of the HSJ gaining a copy of a NHS board paper.

To be clear, in response to your perception that we have made a formal proactive announcement and not communicated it to Health Watch first, as we promised in November, this is simply not the case.

The situation we discussed with you in November has not changed, however I am sorry that you feel we have not kept you up to date with our plan to take the issues to Board and Governing Body meetings.

Since we met with Health Watch colleagues, we have also discussed bringing the STPs together at the Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, South Tyneside and Durham Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC), to which I understand Health Watch representatives have been in attendance.

If it is helpful I will ensure any papers we sent to the JHOSC are also sent to you in case you have missed them.

As you rightly point out, we are extremely mindful of our responsibilities in regards to public engagement around developing an integrated care system, and across the region NHS organisations are agreed that there will be opportunities put in place for this to happen.

From a Northumberland, Tyne, Wear and North Durham (NTWND) perspective over the last year I am conscious that it had been our intention to carry out more engagement with the public around sustainability and transformation partnerships.

Taking on board the feedback from the engagement carried out over winter 2016 with the then emerging consideration that the right direction for the NHS was in developing a regional

approach, on balance we felt unable to develop localised NTWND engagement work further until we had clarity over the future arrangements.

This position though, has not either stopped or affected all the place based public engagement that continues in local CCG areas.

On the subject of statutory responsibilities to engage and consult, I would like to emphasise that the NHS duties around any potential future service changes remain, including the development of cases for change, and where required formal public consultation.

When significant service change issues emerge through the regional work, the NHS will fully meet the both the letter and spirit of our statutory, legal and policy obligations to engage and consult the public.

The list of expectations you include in your letter are helpful to know, and I will ask our strategic communications and engagement lead to include these in our planning.

I will also ask that a meeting is put in place with Health Watch officers to start to look at a regional approach to engagement on service change, in anticipation of what I hope will be positive developments for the region's NHS working in the best interests of patients and the communities we serve.

In summary, the situation remains the same as when we discussed it in November, and I would like to reassure you that you have not missed out on any opportunity to be involved, although I understand why you feel that you have, but I hope this letter sets out our intention for the future.

I am aware that you have included a copy of your letter on the agenda of the two Newcastle and Gateshead health and wellbeing boards. In line with the Cabinet Office pre-election guidance (known as purdah) I will wait until after the local elections to forward this letter to the chairs for inclusion in a future agenda and to provide a public response to the concerns you raise.

In the meantime I wanted to respond to your letter, given the nature of your concerns, but I would ask you not to share this response at this time publicly for the reasons stated above.

I hope this response goes some way towards providing you with assurances about the issues you raise. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss these or any other issues both now and in the future.

Yours sincerely

**Mark Adams**  
**Chief Officer**

CC to original copy list

Norma Redfern, Mayor, North Tyneside Council

Councillor Karen Clarke

Cllr Margaret Hall

Alan Foster, Chief Executive of North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust

Richard Barker, Regional Director (North), NHS England