



## **Emma Lewell-Buck MP**

Member of Parliament for South Shields  
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

The Path to Excellence South Tyneside and Sunderland Consultation  
North of England Commissioning Support  
Riverside House  
Goldcrest Way  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE15 8NY

16<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Dear Sir or Madam

Please find below a copy of the submission I have made to the 'Path to Excellence' – Phase 1 Consultation prior to its closure on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017:

As Member of Parliament for South Shields, it is my fundamental duty to ensure that the interests of my constituents are at the core of each and every public service in my area. I believe that the options put forward by Phase 1 of the consultation on 'The Path to Excellence' are not in the interests of my constituents. In summary:

The consultation itself has lacked integrity from the outset, with senior clinicians, frontline staff, patients, the public and unions coming to me with grave concerns, including being excluded from the process, key information either being absent completely and some of the information that was provided being inaccurate at best.

My observations, when these factors have been challenged, are that there are still many direct and critical questions that remain unanswered by the CCG and the North East Ambulance Service in particular. At this late stage in the consultation, with much information still outstanding, my view is that there has been inadequate information available to the public, elected representatives and NHS staff to facilitate fully informed and reasoned responses to this consultation.

All of the options presented and certainly the 'preferred' options effectively downgrade acute services at South Tyneside District Hospital. This is not a 'Path to Excellence' for the people of South Shields and South Tyneside.

Moreover, no quantitative or qualitative information has been made available on the capacity of Sunderland Royal Hospital and its infrastructure to support the additional patients, visitors, traffic and peripheral needs should any of the options be taken forward.

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Organisations that underpin the safety, affordability and feasibility of the options proposed have not been able to provide assurances of their own capacity to deliver to meet extra demands placed upon them. This would include the displacement of patients who may attend hospitals outwith the scope of this consultation.

My position on the following:

**Paediatric Services** – Retention of the Children and Young People's 24/7 Accident and Emergency Service is the safest and most sustainable option in contrast to the options proposed.

**Obstetrics (Maternity)** – The existing , consultant-led service should be retained at South Tyneside District Hospital, with appropriate investment made to ensure that parents can choose to deliver their babies within the Borough of South Tyneside, with safety and health as the prime considerations. South Tyneside already faces sufficient challenges in terms of health inequalities.

**Gynaecology** – The option presented in the consultation is not practical. My position is to retain the inpatient services, as they are part of a wider service.

**Special Care Baby Unit** – The SCBU should be retained to ensure that babies can be resuscitated and stabilised should unexpected complications arise. My understanding is that the window of opportunity for the safe transfer of a sick baby is far exceeded by the travel time to Sunderland Royal Hospital (And of course the availability of an emergency vehicle).

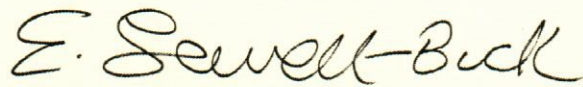
Moreover, some sick babies can be in SCBU for a very lengthy period. Parents can rarely afford the significant travel costs they would incur if babies were in the City of Sunderland, never mind the travel times and massive disruption to family life, especially when there are other dependent children involved.

**Acute Stroke Services** – None of the options restore the services in South Tyneside already transferred to Sunderland. My constituents were promised that this transfer was temporary. Stroke Services in South Tyneside have been diminished without any consultation, with no proposal to consider restoration. Given the lack of evidence from the North East Ambulance Service that there is capacity to deal with lengthier emergency transfers, the lack of assurances that Sunderland Royal Hospital has capacity to deal with an influx of additional services and adding in the travel implications for the carers and families of stroke patients, I would suggest that modern technology could afford solutions as to how specialist stroke staff could work across both sites to offer better services to both South Tyneside and Sunderland, rather than denying South Tyneside any options at all.

Additionally, there is no information available on the detail of the next phases of reconfiguration of services in South Tyneside and Sunderland. Why not? Informed and considered feedback cannot be given on phase 1 of this consultation without that.

Overall, I fully understand the financial pressures being placed on the NHS nationally and the challenges we face in attracting and retaining experienced and qualified staff to the sector. However, as the elected representative for South Shields, I feel that a significantly flawed, loaded and imbalanced consultation has been conducted, without due regard to the inclusion of key senior staff members and to the detriment of my constituents. I reject this consultation as not in their best interests at all and I am requesting more equitable proposals in the favour of South Tyneside.

Yours Faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "E. Lewell-Buck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Emma Lewell-Buck MP**  
**Member of Parliament for South Shields**  
**Shadow Minister for Children and Families**