



PRESS RELEASE – Tuesday 8 August, 2017

New £1.5 investment in South Tyneside Hospital to benefit patients

A new, state-of-the-art MRI scanner - the first of its kind in the UK - will revolutionise treatment, care and experience for patients from South Tyneside and Sunderland.

The scanner, which signals a major £1.5 million investment at South Tyneside District Hospital, uses some of the most sophisticated technology in the world and will enable doctors to diagnose more diseases and conditions, from cancers to sports injuries, in more parts of the body, more quickly.

The scanner will be up and running this winter, replacing equipment which has been in use since 2004. The transfer from old to new is expected to start this autumn but there will be no disruption to the service for patients as a mobile unit will be brought on site while the necessary building work is carried out.

Lead Consultant for Radiology, Dr Richard Cooper, said: "The new scanner is a very exciting development for local patients. It is much more efficient; the image quality it provides is fantastic and results are available much faster. It has amazing potential: for example, it will allow the visualisation of tumours in more detail allowing an improvement in their staging, and we are already looking at how we can use it in more fields in the future, such as cardiology."

Dr Shaz Wahid, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's Medical Director, added: "Despite the unprecedented financial pressures facing the NHS, our trust is putting major investment into the South Tyneside District Hospital site. The acquisition of the new MRI scanner is just one example of our intention to continue to provide local services of the highest quality in South Tyneside. In the past year alone, we have opened Haven Court, the £9 million centre of excellence for integrated health and social care for older people, and our £1.4 million Surgical Centre, which is improving patient experience and access to our surgical services. We also hope to start work early in 2018 on a new energy centre, which is expected to cost in excess of £5 million."

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is the name given to an imaging technique which takes very detailed images of the inside of the body. It uses a powerful magnetic field and radio waves, together with an advanced computer system to build up a series of images through the area under examination. Patients lie within the tunnel or 'bore' of the MRI scanner when being scanned.

The results of the scan can be used to help diagnose conditions, plan treatments and assess how effective previous treatment has been. The scanner can be used to examine almost any part of the body including:

- the brain and spinal cord
- muscles, bones and joints (musculoskeletal)
- heart and blood vessels
- internal organs, such as the liver, womb or prostate gland

The tunnel of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's new scanner will be shorter, wider and better lit, which will mean that it will be more suitable for claustrophobic patients who previously have had to be referred to an off-site 'open' scanner. The wider tunnel will also be more suitable for patients larger than those which the current scanner can accommodate.

The existing scanner has different pieces of equipment for scanning different parts of the body, sometimes requiring patients to be moved if multiple areas of the body are to be scanned. The new scanner will incorporate more of these pieces of equipment together within the patient table. Therefore, once the patient is on the scanner table less movement will be required if more than one body area is being scanned. This is particularly important for the comfort and care of patients who are very ill.

Ends

Photo caption: Lead Consultant for Radiology Dr Richard Cooper, foreground, and radiographers Scott Currell, Laura Langley and David Barlow, with the MRI scanner which will be replaced this winter

Notes to editors

In March 2016, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust came together to form an alliance known as South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group serving a population of 430,000 people.

A joint executive management team was introduced in September 2016 and extensive work is now taking place with both organisations working in partnership to transform local services and ensure high quality, safe and sustainable hospital and community health services which are for the future.

On 4 July 2017, a period of formal public consultation began, led by South Tyneside and Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), as part of the 'Path to Excellence' programme and will run until 15 October. The first services being reviewed and formally consulted upon are stroke, emergency paediatrics and maternity and inpatient gynaecology services.

To find out more about how to get involved in The Path to Excellence consultation go to www.pathtoexcellence.org.uk, call 0191 2172670, or email pathtoexcellence@stft.nhs.uk pathtoexcellence@chsft.nhs.uk