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## **NHS seeks patient views on recent hospital care in South Tyneside and Sunderland**

The NHS in South Tyneside and Sunderland is asking patients and members of the public to feedback about their recent experiences of using hospital services as early work begins on 'phase two' of the Path to Excellence programme.

Over 4,000 local people are being encouraged to complete a survey about their experiences across a range of emergency and planned healthcare services which are provided at South Tyneside District Hospital and Sunderland Royal Hospital.

Any patients who have used emergency care services in South Tyneside or Sunderland over the past two years, or who have attended either hospital for planned surgery or outpatient care, will receive a survey in the post.

The NHS is also welcoming responses from members of the public who have experiences of using services in the past two years with online versions of the patient experience surveys now available via The Path to Excellence website: <https://pathtoexcellence.org.uk/phase-two-2/>.

The patient experience surveys mark the start of wider patient and public engagement activity which is being planned to take place over the next 12 months by local NHS organisations.

Over the past six months, NHS doctors, nurses and support staff from both hospital Trusts have already been coming together to begin early discussions around 'phase two' of the Path to Excellence programme which will look at a number of hospital services covering both emergency and planned care.

Work so far has focussed on understanding the current and likely future challenges, the gaps in quality of care which currently exist against important clinical standards

and the issues facing the long-term sustainability of services, in particular linked to gaps in the workforce and the financial impact of this.

Over 700 staff across both Trusts have already given their feedback on the issues and challenges being faced in their particular areas of work, as well as putting forward ideas for quality improvement. A second round of staff engagement events will take place over the summer bringing together hundreds of hospital staff from both Trusts to suggest and consider ways for improving service quality and safety.

NHS leaders are planning to share the feedback gained so far from staff and patients as part of a draft 'case for change' for 'phase two' of the Path to Excellence programme. This will be formally launched in the summer and will outline the shared ambitions of the local NHS to improve hospital services even further for the future.

Melanie Johnson, Director of Nursing and Patient Experience across both South Tyneside and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trusts said:

“Both the patient surveys and staff events are very important aspects of gathering information, insight and data in order to help us identify the issues facing us and to develop different ideas to bring about quality improvements in patient care. Later in the summer and into the autumn we will share this thinking with wider stakeholders and the public as we develop the case for change for phase two.

“We know that staff across both hospitals are working incredibly hard to deliver outstanding patient care but we also know that we face a number of pressures and challenges which mean there are gaps in the quality of our services which we want to improve. By working together as wider clinical and nursing teams, our aim is to try and resolve some of these challenges and build stronger hospital services in both South Tyneside and Sunderland which are fit for the future.

“We look forward to sharing our aspirations with all stakeholders in the coming months and I would encourage people who have received a survey in the post or who have recent experience with us to feedback their views.”

This early work on phase two of the Path to Excellence programme is taking place as NHS leaders await the outcome of a referral to the Secretary of State for Health from the South Tyneside and Sunderland Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the decisions made by local CCGs for 'phase one'.

The services reviewed under 'phase one' included stroke care; maternity and women's healthcare; and urgent and emergency paediatric services – all of which remain vulnerable due to significant staffing pressures.

NHS leaders are encouraged that the Secretary of State for Health has already sought initial advice from the independent reconfiguration panel which is expected to report in the coming weeks – a process which can sometimes take months.

Matt Brown, director of operations for NHS South Tyneside CCG said:

"I'm pleased to say that the local NHS has provided a significant amount of information to the independent reconfiguration panel this week, and we are hopeful of an early response and resolution to the referral as we know that staff in these services would like to get on with the changes and end the uncertainty all round."

Matt continued: "We've been clear from the start that these changes have been about taking steps to protect services that are vulnerable because of a severe shortage of skilled medical and nursing staff and the decisions made by both CCGs were based on clear clinical evidence.

"In support of our public consultation process we have now been awarded a certificate of 'Best Practice' from the independent Consultation Institute, which provides further assurance to patients and the public that our consultation process was open and transparent.

"We will continue to openly engage with staff, patients, stakeholders and elected members over the coming months as we work together to develop plans to ensure the best possible improvements to local hospital services that will benefit our patients for many years to come."

## ENDS

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### Notes to editors:

Two patient surveys are available on the Path to Excellence website and will close at midnight on **Monday 11th June** (links below):

- [Emergency care survey](#)
- [Planned surgery and outpatient care survey](#)

### About the Path to Excellence

Path to Excellence is a five-year transformation programme which began in autumn 2016 with the aim of improving the quality of healthcare services across South Tyneside and Sunderland. The programme is aligned to the national vision for the NHS, as set out in the Five Year Forward View, which focusses on three core areas:

- **Care and quality** – Closing any gaps in quality and safety which exist by reshaping how we deliver care and driving down variations in patient experience and clinical outcomes which exist
- **System efficiency** – Removing unnecessary organisational boundaries to create better efficiencies across the system and allow the development of truly person centred patient care
- **Health and wellbeing** – Focussing attention on ‘prevention’ so that people are empowered to take accountability and responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and do not become unwell with completely avoidable illnesses

The Path to Excellence programme involves South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust who came together in March 2016 to form a strategic alliance known as ‘South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group’.

Both providers are working closely with health commissioners NHS South Tyneside and NHS Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Groups. The programme has been set up to ensure that future services are developed in a way that provides the highest possible quality of safe patient care and the best possible clinical outcomes for patients in line with all available clinical evidence and guidance.

By changing how some hospital services are delivered in future, it is hoped that this will also help address the difficult recruitment challenges in the workforce, which are being felt right across the NHS, by creating innovative services in South Tyneside and Sunderland which appeal to medical and nursing professionals.

Formal public consultation on ‘phase two’ of the programme is not expected until summer 2019.