

Monday 30th July

South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group seeks views on proposed merger of Trusts

Leaders at South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust are seeking the views of staff, patients and members of the public on plans to become one organisation in the future.

Today marks the start of nine weeks of engagement with all stakeholders as both Trusts progress plans to come together as one. Launching their '*Stronger Together*' shared strategic ambition, both Trusts have outlined a number of key benefits expected from the proposed merger which will provide the opportunity to:

- expand and develop services to benefit more people across South Tyneside and Sunderland by delivering excellent patient care
- remove unnecessary organisational boundaries and create a joined-up 'system' for patients so that they experience more seamless care
- transform the use of digital technology by joining up IT systems to improve patient care and experience
- make initial savings of £8 million by 2023 by streamlining processes and reducing duplication
- attract and retain more highly skilled staff by building a bigger Trust and a more resilient organisation that is fit for the future
- improve capacity for clinical trials, innovation and research and ability to attract more investment into the local NHS
- attract more new graduates and junior doctor trainees into South Tyneside and Sunderland by building on both Trusts' strong reputations for high quality education and training.

The potential merger will also place the two Foundation Trusts in a very strong position to support the development of an 'integrated care partnership' across South Tyneside, Sunderland and parts of County Durham serving a combined population of

around 675,000. Working in partnership across health and social care, the potential merger would see both Trusts play a pivotal role working with NHS partners and local communities to help people to live healthier lives for longer and to stay out of hospital when they do not need to be there.

As well as seeking the views of staff, both Trusts are now inviting patients, members of the public and key stakeholders to give their views on the potential merger by:

- Reading the '*Stronger Together*' strategic ambition summary, FAQs document and watching a video animation – all available online at www.stft.nhs.uk/together and www.chsft.nhs.uk/together
- Completing an online survey / feedback form available at the above links
- Emailing feedback to: trustcomms@stft.nhs.uk or chscomms@chsft.nhs.uk
- Writing to the Chief Executive at either of the following addresses:
 - Stronger Together c/o Chief Executive, Harton Wing, South Tyneside District Hospital, Harton Lane, South Shields, NE34 0PL
 - Stronger Together c/o Chief Executive, Trust Headquarters, Sunderland Royal Hospital, Kayll Road, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, SR4 7TP
- Registering to attend one of four events being held over the summer as follows (note registration is required via the websites listed above):
 - Wednesday 15 August, 6pm – 8pm, Sunderland Royal Hospital
 - Friday 17 August, 2pm – 4pm, South Tyneside District Hospital
 - Monday 3 September 6pm – 8pm, South Tyneside District Hospital
 - Friday 7 September 10.30pm – 12.30pm, Sunderland Royal Hospital

Over the coming weeks, leaders will also be attending a range of formal stakeholder meetings, including meeting with local MPs, to ensure everyone has the opportunity

to hear about the ambitions of the Healthcare Group and ask any questions about the proposed merger.

Chief Executive of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust, Ken Bremner, said: “Through working together over the past two years we have started to make great strides towards our joint vision to provide nationally recognised, high quality and sustainable healthcare services but we know there is still much more for us to do.

“We firmly believe that a formal merger of our two Trusts will put us in a really strong position for the future, allowing us to further accelerate the pace of positive change and to deliver many more quality improvements for the benefit of both our patients and our staff.

“We are committed to ensuring that the process of our potential merger is fully transparent and reflects the views of colleagues, patients, the public and our stakeholders. I would encourage anyone who lives in South Tyneside and Sunderland to get involved and read our ‘*Stronger Together*’ ambition to understand what further benefits the merger may bring and to send us their views.”

All feedback received by the South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group over the next nine weeks will be considered as part of a full business case which is being developed and expected to be submitted to NHS Improvement, the organisation responsible for overseeing NHS Foundation Trusts, by the end of 2018.

ENDS

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Notes to editors

***About South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group**

- South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust have been working closely together since March 2016. They signed a formal partnership agreement in April 2016 to form the South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group and which committed both

organisations to transforming the way local services are delivered for the benefit of patient care.

- A single executive management team has been in place at both NHS Foundation Trusts since November 2016, led by Chief Executive Officer Ken Bremner who was appointed as CEO across both Trusts in September 2016.