

PRESS RELEASE - 4 DECEMBER 2018

Boards of South Tyneside and Sunderland back merger plans

The individual Boards of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust have approved a Full Business Case to be submitted to regulators NHS Improvement for the proposed merger of the two organisations.

At separate statutory Board meetings held during November, members of each individual Trust Board considered in detail the strategic plans and gave their full support for the proposed merger which would see both Trusts become one organisation from 1 April 2019.

NHS Improvement will now consider the Full Business Case, which includes all of the feedback gathered as part of the 'Stronger Together' engagement process, as part of a detailed approvals process which will take place over the next three to four months.

From December, working closely with staff side and trade union representatives, consultation has also begun to take place with NHS staff working across the two Trusts about the process of transferring employment into a newly merged organisation.

The Trust Boards have also confirmed the intended name for the new organisation as 'South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust' with all hospitals and local healthcare facilities retaining their existing names which staff, patients and the public are familiar with.

Chief Executive of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust, Ken Bremner, said: "This is an important milestone in our journey towards becoming one Trust and we now look forward to working with our regulators NHS Improvement to ensure every aspect of the proposed merger is fully considered and duly scrutinised.

“Both Trust Boards remain resolute that a formal merger is in the very best interests of the local populations we serve and will allow us to make further improvements in the quality of patient care by cementing our relationship for the long-term and giving staff much needed stability about the future.

“We still have much work to do in the months ahead as we prepare to come together as one Trust and I would like to thank, in particular, the Council of Governors in each Trust for the time, energy and commitment they continue to give to ensure this process is a success.”

Following approval of the Full Business Case from the Trusts’ regulator NHS Improvement, final approval for the proposed merger will be via each individual Trust Board and Council of Governors in March 2019. From 1 April 2019, it is anticipated that the newly merged Trust will come into operation and detailed work will continue to take place to bring the two organisations together as one.

Healthcare leaders have been repeatedly clear that the proposed merger is about changes to organisational form only and is not about any changes to clinical services for patients. The Path to Excellence programme of clinical transformation is a completely separate process and any future significant changes to hospital services as part of Phase Two will be subject to full formal public consultation planned for summer 2019.

ENDS

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 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.

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