

Save South Tyneside Hospital Campaign



July 16 2024

Claire Riley Chief Corporate Services Officer
Integrated Care Board North East and North Cumbria
Pemberton House
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Dear Claire

I know we have outstanding issues that we raised with you and Samntha Allen the CEO when met earlier in the year alongside the MP Emma Lewell-Buck and we are due to have another meeting later in the year. These were around the Phase 1 services we lost access to directly in South Tyneside such as full maternity, hospital and community stroke rehab, and the fact that travelling to Sunderland was so difficult and costly out of hours without a car which so many people don't have here. We also raised almost the same with Ken Bremner and Liz Davies subsequently when we met with them and they seems good to continue discussion with us as well as yourselves. However, I am afraid I am writing to add to the list in the form of another question to the ICB Board which meets at the end of the month on July 30th.

I cannot see if it is on the agenda but for that meeting, but I know you have been dealing with the serious crisis in dental services for over a year now. As I understood it you identified an extra one-off budget last year to try and alleviate some of the suffering for patients who in effect had no access, or no access they could afford to dental services. Vitally this was also to support the NHS dentistry service and hold back the increasing number of dentists that were leaving the NHS dentistry services. I also remember that it was said at the Board meeting that the main problem was that the NHS dentistry contract needed to be re-negotiated and it was no longer fit for purpose. I remember it being said that the government at the time was refusing to renegotiate it and the ICB had no control over it other than the measures you were taking. I have to say we saw a number of dentists that did recruit new NHS patients so the ICB investment may well of worked for a time.

However, the situation on the ground in our area is getting worse for people trying to access dentists with long delays at best but critically not being able to register with an NHS dentist. This has come to our attention at our meetings in the borough and has also been top of the agenda at the meetings of the local Health Watch who some of our councillors attend. Their perception is that the NHS dental service has been wrecked beyond repair and I would hope health watch has also raised this with you.

Our question to you is that will the ICB maybe along with other ICBs raise with the new government that the Dentistry contract is not fit for purpose. And will they immediately start about revising the contract in favour of NHS patients and the loyal NHS dentists that have stuck with the contract and bring back those dentists that have left and restore NHS dental services for all.

Yours sincerely