



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

North Tyneside General Hospital
Trust Management
Rake Lane
North Shields
Tyne & Wear
NE29 8NH

Tel. 0191 293 2730
Fax. 0191 293 2745

Our Ref: AR.KW

2 August 2021

Sent via email: Jeff.Reid@northumberland.gov.uk

Cllr Jeff Reid
Chair
Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth
NE61 2EF

Dear Councillor Reid

Further to my letter issued 26th July 2021, which I have attached for your reference, regarding the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) held today, I feel compelled to write to the members of the OSC to both clarify a few points raised and respond to some of the questions posed.

I would however like to first take the opportunity to share my disappointment again that we were not allowed to attend the OSC. Following my letter last week, we were assured that this is a Council matter and not one for the Trust to respond to, however, there were clearly questions raised regarding the Trust and, if we had been present as requested, we would have been able to directly address these queries and avoid misrepresentation of our position.

During the meeting, a number of Officers and Members referenced that we do not want to work in partnership any more with Northumberland County Council (NCC). This is fundamentally wrong and we cannot allow this not to be clarified for public record. Our track record in working in partnership with many organisations is well recognised. We have repeatedly made it clear, in letters and meetings with representatives from NCC, that our focus will always be on working in partnership for the betterment of our local communities. However, we do not see the need for formal legal partnerships to always be necessary to achieve this. We made clear that we believe we could have continued to work with NCC under a host arrangement. If this had been agreed by NCC at the time there would have been no reason to be in the position we currently find ourselves in.

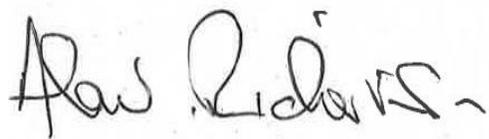
In addition, it is important to clarify a few points raised in the meeting. The decision to move away from the Partnership Agreement was made by the Trust Board after a very long period of deliberation and attempts to address material concerns over governance and oversight.

The questioning regarding the Partnership Agreement started with the Chief Executive of NCC raising concerns in 2019 in a presentation to the Board. Subsequent conversations took place until March 2021; therefore, to suggest that these arrangements were 'ended abruptly', is again a disappointing misrepresentation of the position given the discussions that have taken place for over 2 years. Please also note our refusal to extend for another 12 months should be seen in the context of our efforts to resolve the position for over 2 years. In addition, as has been clearly understood (Key Issue 1 of your paper) our intention was only to end the adult social care arrangements within the Partnership Agreement and not other services – although we recognise this could have been made clearer at the time. It was however made clear by Officers of NCC that it is 'all or nothing' - therefore the Trust has had no alternative but to include these services as part of the transfer of responsibilities.

We also dispute the position that the Trust is mainly a bed-based organisation. We have provided community healthcare services for residents of Northumberland and North Tyneside for the past decade with hundreds of thousands of patient contacts in the community and will continue to do so. To suggest otherwise would be wrong. These services are rated outstanding by the Care Quality Commission and held in high regard by local GP's.

Finally, the attached letter makes clear the Trust position regarding the 0-19 childrens service. We will make this clear again as part of the consultation process. We urge you to reconsider the position of moving this service for the sake of patients, families and staff alike. We would therefore suggest any decisions to be paused until matters are clarified.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Richardson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Alan Richardson
Chair

Enc: Letter dated 26.7.2021

CC: All members of OSC
Cabinet Members