

Dr J Womersley,
NEW Devon CCG,
Crown Yealm,
South Molton

29th Sept 2016

Dear Dr J Womersley,

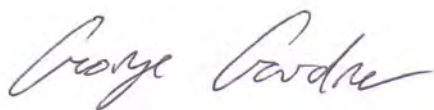
I am writing this open letter on behalf of all the GP practices in the Northern Devon locality, to express our opposition to potentially losing maternity, paediatrics, neonatology & stroke services from North Devon.

Understandably, there has been significant media interest and subsequent outpouring of concerns and anger from the general public, in the press, social media and at meetings. As a body representing all the local GP practices we would like to add our views to the debate. We are aware that the leaked document from the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) is a draft document, and therefore "work in progress", however we feel some of the possible changes to the local health service and community mentioned in the document are so significant that we want to raise these concerns now.

As GPs, our primary concern is the health and wellbeing of each of our patients, and we feel this would be compromised if maternity, paediatrics, neonatology and stroke services are lost to North Devon. It is vital that there is a local service for these specialities that is both safe and sustainable for the local population. As MP Mr Peter Heaton Jones stated at a recent Barnstaple town council meeting "one in five households in North Devon do not have a car" and we believe that the additional travel time to Exeter by car or ambulance for pregnant women, children, babies and patients who have had a stroke may put their health at serious risk. It will also have greatest impact on more deprived families without transport and those living in more remote areas leading to an increased inequality of healthcare across Devon.

Furthermore, this potential reduction in services in North Devon may lead to other specialities becoming less viable and more uncertainty for the hospital. Doctors involved in training doctors in general practice have also expressed their concerns that a loss of these specialities would compromise the local training program, and subsequently the number of qualified GPs in the locality in the future could be at risk.

We understand that the NHS and New Devon CCG have very challenging financial constraints, but we are all united in thinking that maternity, paediatric, neonatal and stroke services need to continue to be available locally in North Devon.



Dr George Gardner
Chair of North Devon GP forum,

On Behalf of all the Northern Devon Locality GP practices:

Litchdon Medical Centre, Bideford Medical Centre, Lynton Medical Centre, East Street and South Molton Health Centre, Hartland Surgery, Queens Medical Centre, Caen Medical Centre, Combe Coastal Practice, Brannam Medical Centre, Holsworthy Medical Centre, Wallingbrook Medical Centre, Northam Surgery, Wooda Surgery, Castle Gardens Surgery, Boutport Medical Centre, Fremington Medical Centre, Black Torrington Surgery, Bradworthy Surgery, Shebbear Surgery, Torrington Health Centre.

CC. Ms Caroline Dawe, North Devon Journal, North Devon Gazette, Dr Tim Burke, Mrs Angela Pedar, Mr Geoffrey Cox MP, Mr Peter Heaton Jones MP & Dr Alison Diamond.