



CHRIS LODER MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR WEST DORSET

Jonathan Higman
Chief Executive, NHS Somerset
Wynford House, Lufton Way
YEOVIL
Somerset
BA22 8HR

Our Ref: CL50349

28th May 2024

Dear Jonathan

REMOVAL OF HYPER ACUTE STROKE UNIT FROM YEOVIL DISTRICT HOSPITAL

Thank you for your time with members of the Somerset NHS Integrated Care Board when we met in Frome on Thursday 23rd May.

I was pleased to understand further details of the Board's decision to remove the Hyper Acute Stroke Unit from Yeovil District Hospital. I also appreciated the opportunity to share with you the concerns of many thousands of people, particularly my constituents who believe that the Board has made the wrong decision.

At the meeting, I said I would reflect on our discussion, and I am, today, pleased to share with you my informed view of the reconfiguration position – as below:

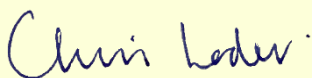
- The business case assumes ambulance journey times at 3am. This is not in line with the expected majority of the typical times of Stroke Call Outs. This will not give an accurate journey time assumption. By default this flaws your business case because the calculation will not robustly calculate the number of patients who will benefit (or who will negatively benefit) from your decision.
- The wider impact on the Ambulance service is not fully understood as part of this case, and the full additional costs do not feature as part of this case. I fear that the actual costs to the Health Care system are more than is featured in the case.
- The knock-on effect is that the ambulance journey times for those awaiting category 3 and 4 health responses will be made worse. And when some are waiting for 8+ hours for an ambulance, that is not acceptable.
- It is unclear as to how many people are expected to benefit from this proposal and the tangible benefits are unclear.
- It is unclear to local people how the 25% of Yeovil stroke patients who will continue to self-present at Yeovil Hospital will be treated.
- People in and around Yeovil believe that they will be going to Taunton as has been communicated previously. However, they will actually go to Dorchester not and the most serious patients will ultimately go to Southampton.

- The additional cost of £4.2m per annum, with a service being taken away from Yeovil, makes no financial sense and constituents cannot understand this paradox.
- The business case suggests that recruitment is a problem in/near Yeovil, but it will be easier in Dorchester. Average house prices are £227k in Yeovil, £109k cheaper than compared to £336k in Dorchester. £950 median average rent for band D in Yeovil, is £300 per month cheaper with £1,250 median average rent in Dorchester for a band D. This is not conducive to the assumption that suggests recruitment is easier in Dorchester than Yeovil, especially when such a facility does not exist today in Dorchester.
- The needs of Dorset have not been adequately considered in the Somerset ICB's plan. The consultation with me as an affected MP did not happen and the voice of those impacted in Dorset has not been adequately heard before the decision was made. Even Sherborne was consistently spelt incorrectly in the business case.
- The petition of over 10,000 people demonstrates that the ICB has underestimated the strength of public opinion and that local people do not understand the decision the ICB Board has taken and are, thus far, hugely opposed to it. That petition is here: www.change.org/p/save-yeovil-s-acute-stroke-care-services
- There is no HASU today at DCH, and the risks involved with setting up a new service where one does not exist are not adequately considered.

These are just some of the observations that have lead me to conclude that this is a very high risk proposal as it stands and until these risks are addressed, I cannot support the proposals to remove the HASU at Yeovil District Hospital.

If circumstances allow, I shall be pleased to hear from the ICB once the purdah period is over as to how these risks are mitigated and issues addressed, otherwise I will look to make representations to the Secretary of State for Health to overturn your decision.

Yours sincerely



Chris Loder MP

Member of Parliament for West Dorset