

## **Stockport Together Public Consultation: An alternative view by Stockport NHS Watch**

***The NHS is undergoing yet another reorganisation. The Conservative Government is determined to destroy and privatise our NHS. The latest attempt is through the creation of Sustainability and Transformation Plans and eventually Accountable Care Organisations. Stockport Together is the vehicle by which this may be achieved in Stockport.***

***Stockport Together is running a public consultation on some aspects of their plans.***

**<https://www.stockport-together.co.uk/get-involved/consultation>**

***However, it does not give you a chance to really have an input into what is happening to your health and social care. The truth is that decisions have already been made and we are being asked what we think about certain changes and not whether they should have been made at all.***

***Most of what we are told 'might happen' is already taking place. Beds will have to close at Stepping Hill to fund care in the community, we are asked about how that decision will be made, but it will happen as the transition money will not last forever and the plans depend on this happening.***

Please read our document below and answer the questions at the end. Please email your answers to Stockport NHS Watch with the word 'Consultation' in the subject field.

**[info@stockportnhswatch.co.uk](mailto:info@stockportnhswatch.co.uk)**

**You could also tell your local councillor by email what you think about cuts, bed closures and the threat of privatisation as Stockport Together becomes an Accountable Care Organisation.**

Your councillors can have an effect on what is happening.

**<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/councillors/find-your-councillor>**

Stockport Together is a programme to make net savings of £25 million by taking care out of hospitals and therefore closing beds. It is part of a wider reorganisation and cuts programme for Stockport health and social care.

Due to government underfunding, the deficit in local health and social care is set to rise to a massive £156 million by 2020-21! This is due to inflation, rising needs of an ageing population and underfunding since 2010.

While Business Cases have been published for Stockport Together, no information has been published for the remaining £131 million of savings and cuts. These are bound to bear severely on Stepping Hill Hospital.

Stockport Together claims that improving some community health services and integrating them with social care will reduce the need for hospital services. Some of the money saved by reducing hospital services will be used to pay for the changes in community services.

Stockport Together partners are not telling people that the programme is part of the Government's nationwide STPs for moving care out of hospitals. The Clinical Commissioning Group and the Council (along with the Stockport Foundation Trust at Stepping Hill) are saying that if long-term sick and frail elderly people are looked after better in the community, they will need to go to hospital less, so money can be saved and everyone wins. But they avoid saying that they are following a model (Sustainability and Transformation Plans) that is being imposed across with England with cuts to services, particularly hospitals, and rationing of care.

### **Key points of Stockport Together are:**

Neighbourhood hubs of integrated district nursing and social care will more closely monitor the chronic sick - mainly the frail elderly. This is an important and overdue improvement, but the evidence for such changes leading to reduced need for hospital care is weak. Stockport Together promotional material blames too much hospitalisation for loss of independence by the long-term sick and elderly. It glosses over the serious impact of social care cuts in undermining people's independence. Recruiting professional staff will be a challenge, with the same community plans being introduced everywhere in England simultaneously.

Intermediate tier services are the main way in which hospital admissions will immediately be reduced. Many very sick people will be cared for in their own homes.

Most of the winter crisis hospitalisations (usually around Christmas) will in future be deflected to intermediate care. Problems with intermediate tier substitution for hospital include: unclear availability of doctors; no specialist doctors (consultants); most care will be via nurses dropping in rather than round the clock, though there will be some provision of "night-sitting" by support staff; three-day limit on more intensive form of intermediate care; worryingly, the central intermediate hub can overrule GP decisions on hospitalisation.

GPs will concentrate on the chronic sick. Unfortunately this will cut availability of appointments with GPs for other patients. Making GP appointments harder to obtain will further discourage people coming forward who may have symptoms of serious illness but don't want to waste the doctor's time. Some new services will be provided in/via surgeries such as physio and counselling - the numbers have not been disclosed. A "navigation service" will direct patients away from appointments with GPs to whatever other services are available or to the pharmacy etc.

Urgent GP appointments may be through an all-Stockport hub - details have not been disclosed.

### **Hospital cuts and bed closures**

The new plans depend on a 30% reduction in A&E and a 40% cut in outpatient activity as well as a 27% reduction in urgent admissions. An aim of reducing patients' length of stay by 50% would imply halving the size of Stepping Hill Hospital eventually. We do know that the first Stockport Together

Business Case said wards would be demolished due to its plans. Last autumn Trust chief executive Ann Barnes spoke of a “much reduced hospital”.

Simply, money currently spent on hospital beds, must be transferred to community care, therefore beds in Stepping Hill must close. The Stockport Together consultation says that they ‘have secured an agreement with the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, that provides a one-off additional £19 million pounds to invest in health and care services for the people of Stockport’. A representative of Stockport Together however said that they have been ‘awarded £19m from the Greater Manchester Transformation Fund which allows us to invest in the new community models of care without decommissioning anything else (bed closures) to fund this first. Going forward our investment plan does assume that fewer people will need to spend time in hospital’.

What the money does therefore is allow double running of services, but only for a short time. We are not told what will happen if evidence suggests that beds should not close. The £19million is not the investment in health care that we are led to believe.

Following visits in March and June this year CQC inspectors rated urgent and emergency services at Stepping Hill as “inadequate” overall.

Among other problems, there is a shortage of staff. Emergency beds will be cut under Stockport Together plans.

However, there is much evidence to suggest that changes to community care do not reduce the demand for hospital beds. For example,

<http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2017/01/06/closing-more-hospital-beds-the-policy-zombie/>

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/nhs-hospital-bed-numbers>

## **Sustainability and Transformation Plans**

Stockport Together claim that they are not involved in the imposition of Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs), however it is officially a Local Plan within the Greater Manchester STP. Stockport Together describes itself as a response to the “Five Year forward view” which CCGs were told to implement. The STPs followed later as an imposition of the “Five Year Forward View”. Therefore STPs and Stockport Together have the same origin and purpose and are essentially the same thing even though the initial agreement to set up Stockport Together predates the STPs. STPs take resources from hospitals to cut deficits - often through cuts in emergency beds and access to A&E, which is the same as Stockport Together. A member of the Stockport Together team has said that Stockport Together is cutting need not beds. However, Stockport Together aims to care for most of the current winter pressure inpatients at home, without direct access to hospital specialists. This represents a reduction in the level of care available, not a reduction in need. Stockport Together admits their plans are high risk. They are aware that there are insufficient people to treat people successfully in the community and that there are problems in carrying out

the reforms necessary in General Practice. Saying Stockport Together will improve care while £156 million is being cut/saved is not believable.

## Creation of An Accountable Care Organisation and Privatisation

Stockport Together will become a single autonomous Accountable Care Organisation for Stockport's health and social care. The details are unknown, including how/if the organisation will be held to account for the care it provides on a squeezed budget. Setting up Accountable Care Organisations is a Government policy. These are modelled on similar organisations in the US and are insurance based private health systems where care is delivered for a population at a fixed price. Once the money runs out, even if you need it, no treatment will be available. As well as being iniquitous in itself, this breaks the NHS constitution, which states that treatment must be provided on the basis of need.

The worry is that with the destabilising of the NHS taking place, privatisation will increase. This issue was raised by Professor Stephen Hawking recently when he said that 'A publicly provided, publicly run system is the most efficient and therefore more cost effective way to provide good healthcare to all'. Indeed in some parts of the country e.g. Nottingham, the health and social care of the population is managed by a private US linked health care company. Already private companies are benefitting from people paying for their own operations like knee replacements because they are in too much pain to wait. The accountable care organisation that will be created in Stockport is perfect for take-over by a private health organisation. <https://leedskeepournhspublic.wordpress.com/2017/08/29/talknhs-at-royal-college-of-medicine/>

## Our Questions:

- 1** *Do you feel that the consultation put forward by Stockport Together gives you enough understandable information to enable you to make decisions about future health and social care, especially whether and how to permanently close beds at Stepping Hill Hospital?*
- 2** *Are you happy for beds to close in Stepping Hill and for parts of the building to close and even be demolished to allow land to be sold. The evidence is that there will be an increase in the number of people needing care in Stockport, particularly as more houses are built?*
- 3** *Do you have any concerns about changes to access to health care, the setting up of an accountable care organisation in Stockport and the possible privatisation of our healthcare as is happening in other parts of the country?*

**Please email your answers to: [info@stockportnhswatch.co.uk](mailto:info@stockportnhswatch.co.uk) including the word 'Consultation' in the subject field**

