

Comment 2017

STOCKPORT TOGETHER

For many months Stockport NHS Watch has been trying to draw attention to the folly of the reorganisation of Health and Social Care in the borough known as Stockport Together. Recent 'listening' or 'pre consultation' events have been held for the public, but these have been limited in their purpose because key information about the changes and their impact is not being shared and thus the public is not informed enough to ask critical questions.

With a few honourable exceptions our local councillors and members of the CCG all seem to have been issued with rose tinted spectacles thus leading to a lack of democratic accountability for such a major change to the structure of an institution we value above all else in our country, the National Health service.

There is much evidence from around the country that more and more NHS services are being privatised. This is where we fear the changes in Stockport are heading. There are aspects of Stockport Together which address the needs of a modern Health Service. However the resources for such changes fall short of requirements in terms of staffing: shortage of GP's, hospital doctors, nurses and community care workers.

There is a lack of good quality social and residential care for our increasingly older population and that coupled with a potential threat to our local hospital Stepping Hill in terms of bed closures makes Stockport Together's claim for improved care for older people sound rather hollow.

There is a lack of money. Despite the fact that we already spend a lower proportion of our GDP on the health services than other major European countries central government funding is still being reduced. Stockport Together's own risk assessment of the changes puts the risk at very high.

Isn't it time we had a proper consultation on what the future might hold and more transparency from those charged with deciding our future health care?