

**SUNDERLAND EYE INFIRMARY**

**REPORT OF SOUTH TYNESIDE AND SUNDERLAND NHS FOUNDATION TRUST**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide an update to the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the redevelopment of Sunderland Eye Infirmary (SEI).

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 SEI is the region's only specialist eye hospital and dedicated centre for ophthalmology care. It is widely regarded across the NHS, both regionally and nationally, as a centre of excellence for eye services caring for patients from across the North East, Cumbria and beyond.
- 2.2 The current facilities on Queen Alexandra Road in the South East of the City are now over 75 years old with a costly and aging infrastructure that does not reflect the world class treatment and outstanding NHS care taking place inside. Building a brand new, fit-for-purpose specialist eye hospital has long been part of the Trust's ambitions.
- 2.3 Strategic discussions with Sunderland City Council began in December 2019 about the potential to develop a new eye hospital in the heart of the City. Throughout 2020, work has taken place to develop a detailed business case for a new eye hospital which was approved by South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust Board in late 2020.

**3. CLINICAL SERVICES**

- 3.1 There will be no change to the clinical services provided in the new Eye Hospital. All clinical services currently provided from SEI will transfer to the new eye hospital to be delivered from a new modern, purpose-built environment in a much more accessible City centre location. This includes:
- 24/7 Emergency Eye Department
  - Regional Cataract Treatment Centre
  - Inpatient ward
  - Theatres for inpatient and day case surgery
  - Medical photography/imaging department
  - Outpatient services
  - Paediatric / children's services
- 3.2 The new Eye Hospital is also being designed to allow for future expansion should this be required, given the ongoing rise in demand for ophthalmology services.

The Trust is also keen to continue expanding its specialist eye services in the community through its existing satellite hubs across South Tyneside, Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool. A further satellite hub is also being planned to open at Cleadon Park Primary Care Centre in South Tyneside.

#### **4. ASSURANCE TESTING**

- 4.1 Although the plans for a new eye hospital do not constitute any significant service change or reconfiguration of patient services, in line with best practice, the Trust has still carried out a self-assessment against the five assurance tests as outlined in the national NHS guidance. This self-assessment is summarised below.
- 4.2 Strong public and patient engagement: The Trust is fully committed to fulfilling its statutory engagement duties in relation to an open and transparent process as plans for a new SEI progress. A detailed patient and public involvement strategy is in place to ensure:
- Engagement takes place at the formative stage of the design process
  - Detailed information is openly shared about the rationale for a new SEI
  - Ample time is given for the clinical design team and architects to consider feedback gathered through patient and public involvement and any necessary changes made prior to building works commencing.
- 4.3 Detailed engagement has also already taken place with patients and service users at the earliest possible opportunity in order to influence discussions with the architects at the formative design stage. This has included:
- Patient experience insights from Friends and Family feedback
  - Representatives from the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and patients acting as critical friends during early design stages
  - Feedback from over 2,000 patients who have recently attended SEI (this was a representative sample of patients across all geographic localities served by SEI).
- 4.4 Consistency with current and prospective need for patient choice: Patients' right to choice is embedded in NHS statute and policy, through both the NHS Constitution (2015) and The NHS Choice Framework (2016). Patients choose to attend SEI for their eye care based on locality and service provision. Referred by their GP, optician or other external service, patients can be seen as part of a hub and spoke service with SEI being the hub and a variety of other satellite health premises available for most, but not all, sub-speciality treatments. The very nature of ophthalmology care requires specific imaging, day case, or inpatient surgery which cannot be provided at all satellite sites therefore patient choice is sometimes minimised for these aspects. A new SEI build will re-provide the same hub and spoke service which is currently in place with no major changes to how services are offered or managed. There will however be an enhancement to patient choice with more care planned to be delivered locally at the spoke satellite locations of Cleadon Park at South Tyneside and at Durham Treatment Centre.
- 4.5 Clear, clinical evidence base: Service sustainability and the ability to maintain safe and effective clinical care is a core driver for the development of a new eye hospital. The current environment is no longer fit for purpose and does not support an optimum patient experience. The ability to enhance care pathways within a new SEI build through the provision of an ambulatory care area, through dedicated paediatric spaces and improved technology systems will allow

achievement of more important quality standards. The proposed new build will also futureproof the service in light of ever growing demand on ophthalmology services which is predicted to continue to increase by 3 – 4 % year per year based on current SEI growth patterns and clinical views. Some sub-specialities are expected to grow at greater rates such as cataracts and macular services mainly due to an aging and increasingly diabetic population and new therapies for common chronic eye diseases which require repeated attendance for monitoring and treatment. The Trust will also consider wider growth capacity, as required, to support system recovery for ophthalmology services in light of COVID-19.

- 4.6 Support for proposals from commissioners: The Trust has full support from its main commissioners in Sunderland, South Tyneside and County Durham as well as support from the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System and NHS England / Improvement.
- 4.7 Assurance around proposals for bed reductions: In reviewing how the clinical teams work within the constraints of the current SEI building, it is clear that a large number of patients are currently admitted to the inpatient ward unnecessarily purely because it is the only place to receive a patient. A reduction of 14 inpatient beds has therefore been recommended in the new build which will have a capacity of eight single inpatient rooms. The new hospital will, however, also encompass a new ambulatory care area where up to six patients at a time can be accommodated who require short periods of clinical care without being fully admitted to a ward. In addition, there will also be a new Day of Surgery Admission Unit (DOSU) which includes 10 individual recovery rooms meaning patients will no longer need to be admitted to the inpatient ward when attending for day case surgery.
- 4.8 This approach echoes the key learning from the redevelopment of Manchester Eye Hospital where the inpatient ward was significantly oversized. The new SEI building will also incorporate a separate dedicated paediatric area and ensure all regulatory and quality standards are met for the care of children.

## **5. FINANCE**

- 5.1 A development agreement is in place between South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust and Sunderland City Council in order to secure the £36m needed to deliver the new Eye Hospital. The Trust will repay this in full and it has no impact on other Council resources. This will ensure the best value for money and continued investment in the regeneration of the City.
- 5.2 In pulling together proposals for a new eye hospital, the Trust also considered the significant financial consequences of ‘doing nothing’ and continuing to operate from the current SEI building which has backlog maintenance risk of circa £5.5m as of 2020. The current building would require considerable repair costing circa £40 million of capital investment to fully upgrade its infrastructure. This would also need to be done on a phased approach over three years with extended use of temporary decant facilities making the impact on both capital and revenue unaffordable. To continue to run services from the current site will be much more expensive in the long-term and would not be an efficient use of taxpayer’s money.

## **6. PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

- 6.1 A robust programme of patient / service user and public involvement is now underway as plans for the new eye hospital progress. The Trust's communications and engagement strategy adheres to NHS England's 10 best practice involvement and engagement principles and has been independently assured to confirm:
- that the approaches set out are in-line with NHS duties to involve patients in the development / design of the hospital
  - that the hospital move is 'a lift and shift' to a new site and, as such, there will not be any major changes to clinical services (apart from obvious improvements that a new hospital will bring as outlined in this briefing)
  - that information received during patient and public involvement activity is documented and taken into account as part of the design and development process.
  - that equality impact reviews and patient flow information is assessed and used to inform involvement activity and who should be proactively involved in providing feedback on the plans.
- 6.2 In line with NHS regulatory guidance, the approach to public engagement or formal consultation should be proportionate to the change being proposed. In this case, the recommended approach is a robust programme of patient / service user and public involvement.
- 6.3 Engagement already undertaken to date, along with involvement activities which will continue to be undertaken as part of a co-production approach, is considered by the Trust and the CCG as a proportionate arrangement for gaining valuable views to inform the design and build phases of the new eye hospital.
- 6.4 This public engagement approach is also supported by NHS England / Improvement who have confirmed that the redevelopment of SEI does not represent a significant service change under the definitions of the NHS England's 'Planning, Assuring and Delivering Service Change'.

## **7. TRAVEL AND ACCESS**

- 7.1 Access to the new eye hospital is an important consideration and the Trust's patient feedback to date suggests that 80% of patients who attend Sunderland Eye Infirmary currently arrive by car and 13% rely on public transport.
- 7.2 Regardless of how people arrive, the new City centre location will offer much improved access and excellent transport links. For those who do attend using public transport, local networks are within close walking distance for bus, train and metro facilities.
- 7.3 There will be a dedicated on-site car park at the new eye hospital with 90 spaces for patients and visitors. This will include accessible bays and electric car charging points. In addition, a new car parking facility providing 650 spaces is planned nearby at Farringdon Row. 100 of these spaces will be dedicated for staff at the new eye hospital. For those who are travelling to the new eye hospital by car, there is also the existing multi-storey car park at St Mary's.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 Health and equality have been consistently considered throughout the initial planning phases and will continue to be an integral part of the discussions to ensure that the nine main characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 are met. An Equality Impact Assessment in line with public sector equality duties will be undertaken.

## **9. TIMING AND NEXT STEPS**

- 9.1 A period of patient and public involvement is now underway to gather as much feedback about our plans as possible between March and May. The following virtual public engagement sessions will take place for people to find out more about the plans. To book visit: [www.stsft.nhs.uk/neweyehospital](http://www.stsft.nhs.uk/neweyehospital) or call 0191 404 1284.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Thursday 15 April	2pm - 3pm
Tuesday 20 April	6pm - 7pm
Tuesday 27 April	10am – 11am
Thursday 29 April	2pm – 3pm
Tuesday 4 May	1pm – 2pm

- 9.2 The Trust hopes to submit a formal planning application at the end of May 2021 with building work expected to begin in 2022 (subject to planning approval) and the new Eye Hospital to open in 2024.

## **10. RECOMMENDATION**

- 10.1 That Members of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee:  
(a) note the plans for the redevelopment of Sunderland Eye Infirmary and (b) formally approve the proactive patient and public involvement strategy as the most appropriate and efficient approach for ensuring local people are able to influence the new eye hospital plans.

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