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Dear Faruk

Proposed changes to NHS commissioning in South East London

I am writing regarding the proposed changes to the NHS commissioning reorganisation plans in South East London (SEL) and specifically the plans to integrate the 6 separate Clinical Commissioning Groups into a single SEL CCG. I understand that NHS Lewisham CCG will vote on this matter shortly.

While I understand that efforts to engage with Lewisham residents and clinicians have been undertaken locally, the Council continues to have concerns about the impact of this proposed merger and I wanted CCG board members to be fully aware of these concerns before any vote is taken.

While we welcome any move to reduce the risk of privatisation within the NHS, the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership has no legal standing. While building cooperation among NHS providers and working in partnership with local government is broadly welcomed, this should not be used as a way to centralise services in a way that means our residents have less choice of NHS provision and less local provision.

Despite the proposal to develop local integrated commissioning arrangements including a Borough Based Board, many decisions, including acute hospital commissioning decision, will be taken on a SEL basis. The Council is concerned that this could lead to a reduction in both local influence on the shape of these services, and could lead to a reduction in services provided locally in the borough.

I am also keen for formal reassurances that the CCG has confidence that the proposed arrangements, with a balance between centrally commissioned services and locally commissioned services, will work in practice and that we will not end up with all decisions being made centrally, the Lewisham voice not being heard and residents and indeed professionals not having confidence in the safety and effectiveness of the local clinical system.

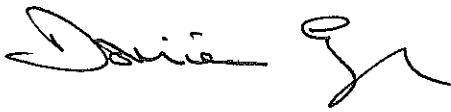
Although the proposed merger will continue to ensure that there is a clinical majority on the SEL CCG Governing Body, there will be a much reduced Lewisham GP voice and I remain unconvinced that the needs of our population will be as well understood by other, non-Lewisham, clinicians. The plans also propose only a single Director of Public Health supporting work across six very different boroughs – reducing the local expertise available. Therefore I would seek assurances that the proposed SEL CCG

has plans in place to ensure that the new Governing Body has a good understanding of the health needs of our Lewisham population, understands the specific challenges and health inequalities in Lewisham and are motivated to support local efforts to address these.

I very much appreciate that in the current economic environment, when funding for public services has been cut substantially since 2010, the NHS is struggling to meet rising demand. However, Lewisham Council cannot accept any reduction in provision that may adversely impact on the healthcare of residents in Lewisham, or further add to the existing health inequalities in our borough.

I would ask that you both note my comments and share this letter with members of the CCG Governing Body in advance of any vote to change the existing structure.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damien Egan', followed by a stylized flourish.

Damien Egan
Mayor of Lewisham