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Via email to:

John Cryer MP, Leyton and Wanstead  
Stella Creasy MP, Walthamstow  
Rt Hon Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP, Chingford and Woodford Green

3 September 2021

Dear John, Stella and Sir Iain

### **Redevelopment of Whipps Cross Hospital**

Thank you for the support you have so far provided as we have been developing our plans for a brand new hospital at Whipps Cross. I wrote to you previously on 26 May following concerns you raised on behalf of your constituents. I am writing to provide updates on how we are continuing to listen and respond to those concerns.

But first, as you know, on Sunday 25 July Barts Health declared a major incident due to the very heavy rainfall that caused flooding at Whipps Cross Hospital. The flooding caused significant damage to buildings and the electrical system that feeds the southern side of the site, which resulted in a power cut to many services and wards and the immediate loss of 168 beds and 12 surgical theatres. With the help of the London Fire Brigade, over 100 inpatients from the affected buildings had to be transferred to other areas of Whipps Cross or to other hospitals.

This was a huge logistical effort that our staff - with support from local partners - responded to superbly, ensuring the care and safety of our patients. However, it also exposed the fragilities of the Whipps Cross site, not only the disruption caused on the day itself, but the impact on services after the event with the cancellation or rescheduling of over 500 planned surgical operations and over 3,000 outpatient appointments. Our ageing and sprawling estate makes the hospital particularly vulnerable to such events; and the fact that it was a newer part of the hospital most affected by the floods reinforces the case for building a new, modern, hospital on the site as soon as possible.



## **Bed Capacity at Whipps Cross**

Our clinically-led health and care services strategy for Whipps Cross aims to deliver improvements in services that, working collaboratively with primary care and community services partners, will help more people avoid the need to attend hospital in the first place, will reduce the need for admissions for those that do attend and, for those that are admitted, will reduce the time needed to be spent in a hospital bed. Overall, we expect this to mean fewer days spent in hospital beds each year at Whipps Cross.

It is for this reason that the outputs from our capacity modelling suggest the new hospital will need fewer overnight beds even after taking into account future population growth. However, we know that this has been a cause of concern for some people. Having listened to people's concerns, we reviewed our plans and designs again, and will be able to provide at least the same number of overnight inpatient beds in the new hospital as are provided at present. We remain committed to flexibility in both planning and design, and this will allow us to maintain the bed base rather than reduce it, should that prove necessary.

We will keep the bed capacity for the new hospital under continuous review. We will maintain a relentless focus on delivering improvements to services - in the hospital and across the local health and care system - each year between now and when the new hospital opens. As we see the impact of these changes, we can continue to refine our assumptions for future capacity during the planning and the construction phases for the new hospital, recognising the demand for inpatient beds will change over time.

We plan to report progress on the impact of service transformation and how that relates to our hospital capacity assumptions on an annual basis. This will include, for example, how improvements in primary care and community services - and the shift towards more same day care in the hospital - are supporting our assumptions on both overnight and same day bed capacity, in order to inform whether further changes to our plans are needed ahead of the new hospital's completion.

Moreover, the new hospital will have more clinical space than it does today. It will have nearly 50% more day case beds, reflecting the changing pattern of healthcare delivery with an increasing emphasis on same-day care, avoiding overnight admission where that is possible. This will be supported by a near doubling of CT and MRI scanners (from 5 to 9) providing over 30,000 more scans each year for patients. This will transform our ability to diagnose and treat swiftly and reduce unnecessary stays in hospital. For those that do stay, many more will be able to enjoy the privacy and dignity of single rooms, with over 70% single rooms in the new hospital compared to around 17% today.

## **Specialist Palliative and End of Life Care**

Earlier this year we decided to undertake a clinically-led review of the model for specialist palliative and end-of-life care in light of the representations that had been made to us about

the Margaret Centre. The findings of our review to date are that clinical care should be driven by patient choice, with services planned and delivered around the patient with enhanced multi-professional working, and improved links with primary care and community services. The hospital will continue to provide high-quality specialist palliative and end-of-life care, in both the Margaret Centre and other inpatient wards until the new hospital is built.

We have reflected on the discussions we have had with patients and local interest groups during the review and we recognise there is an opportunity for the hospice movement to be more involved in the delivery of end-of-life care. Therefore, we have agreed with St Joseph's Hospice that we will work with them, with North East London Clinical Commissioning group (CCG) and others, through a process of co-design, to establish what an end-of-life care offer for Waltham Forest and the rest of the Whipps Cross catchment population could look like, in a way that could be delivered from the Margaret Centre. In doing so, we would need to look at whether the unit itself would remain on the Whipps Cross site, or be re-provided elsewhere in Waltham Forest.

This next phase of the work will be taken forward by North East London CCG, working with St Joseph's and Barts Health. We should expect it to involve specialist clinicians, members of the multi-professional team, patients' representatives and community organisations. St Joseph's will also be liaising closely with Saint Francis Hospice to ensure a partnership approach across the whole of the Whipps Cross catchment area including Redbridge. The detail of next steps will be agreed and communicated in the coming weeks.

I hope this is helpful. I would be very happy to schedule a briefing session for you, if that would be helpful to talk in more detail about our proposals. I look forward to your continued support as we develop our plans for a brand new hospital to serve our local communities and our staff for generations to come.

Yours sincerely



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