

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP  
Secretary of State for Health

1<sup>st</sup> September 2015

Dear Mr Hunt,

## **PURLEY WAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL – URGENT CARE**

### **Joint Open Letter from South of the Croydon Borough Residents' Associations**

We are contacting you regarding urgent care provision at Purley Hospital, in our capacity as Residents' Associations representing the interests of 85,000 residents in Purley and surrounding districts.

In summary; Purley hospital was redeveloped with £11 million of public money in 2012 – 13 to provide improved outpatient facilities and an Urgent Care Centre for our residents. In May 2014 the Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group drastically downgraded the urgent care services provided at Purley, and significantly reduced its opening hours. This was done without appropriate prior consultation. Since the downgrade we have engaged directly with the CCG and through Croydon HealthWatch to have the urgent care services reinstated. However the CCG have repeatedly denied there was a downgrade, have been intransigent in our discussions, and have suggested that further cuts in services may be forthcoming. We therefore ask you to intervene in this matter to ensure that our residents get the local urgent care service they need, as originally agreed and implemented when the hospital was redeveloped.

Purley Hospital is in the district centre of Purley with a local population of approximately 85,000 residents in the surrounding wards of Purley, Kenley, Coulsdon West, Coulsdon East and Sanderstead. Our previous MP, Sir Richard Ottaway, led a campaign to have the hospital redeveloped and an Urgent Care Centre provided to meet the needs of local residents. Our residents have an older age profile than Croydon as a whole, and many rely on public transport for accessing local services. Attending the nearest UCC in Croydon University Hospital (CUH) by public transport is impractical for many, and in some areas requires the use of 3 different buses. The original introduction of the Urgent Care Centre at Purley provided accessible local facilities to address this problem, and provided the urgent care services needed by the local population.

After Purley Hospital was redeveloped, the CCG failed to sufficiently publicise the new Urgent Care Centre, even to the extent that it took significant pressure from ourselves just to get a sign erected in the hospital grounds. Despite this lack of publicity, attendance numbers were increasing, and rose by 56% in the year preceding the downgrade. However, the CCG discounted this increase, and ignored their failure to publicise services, when justifying their decision to downgrade the Urgent Care Centre.

The CCG deny it was ever an Urgent Care Centre, despite it being referred to as such in their own internal documentation, on the NHS website, and on the sign above the door. Furthermore, the centre previously provided services expected of an Urgent Care Centre including treatment for

minor ailments; access to the x-ray facility on-site; and extensive opening hours from 8am – 8pm, 7 days a week. Today, there is no walk in access to the x-ray facility to diagnose fractures and breaks, no treatment is available for minor ailments, and the hours have been reduced to 2pm to 8pm. Yet the CCG continue to deny that services have been downgraded.

In our meetings with the CCG they have indicated that a full closure of the urgent care centre is an option being considered, with more services being centralised at Croydon University Hospital. This completely disregards the need for local provision of services for our residents and ignores the travel difficulties they face in getting to CUH. Because of this, many of our residents choose to attend hospitals outside the Croydon Borough when they need urgent care.

We note that within the NHS Five Year Plan, services should be provided close to local populations; and as much as possible, be drawn away from acute hospitals. This is an approach already adopted by many other CCGs. We are therefore puzzled as to why the Croydon CCG has done the opposite to this and moved services away from our local community.

Furthermore, Croydon is London's most populous Borough, and CUH A&E department is under immense pressure, which will only increase during its planned redevelopment. Surely, it would make sense to utilise the excellent facilities already available at Purley, by providing Urgent Care and Minor Injuries services on the Purley Hospital site during the day, from 8am-8pm; both to service the needs of the local population, and to relieve pressure on the UCC and A&E Depts. at CUH? Additionally, the Purley Hospital UCC could also provide 7 day a week GP care, as per Government policy to provide this by 2020.

The CCG are currently undertaking a wide-ranging review into urgent care provision within Croydon Borough. The catalyst for this review is a number of private contracts coming to an end in 2017. It is therefore essential that the Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group:

- fully appreciate the need in our community for local provision of urgent care services;
- accept the travel difficulties faced by our residents in attending CUH;
- implement the local provision of service requirements within the NHS 5 year plan;
- reinstate the services that were originally agreed and implemented at Purley Hospital.

To date they have failed to listen to us, to our residents, and to our new local MP, Chris Philp, who is fully behind this campaign. Therefore, we must now ask that you urgently intervene in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

*Diane Hearne*  
Diane Hearne  
Hartley & District RA

*Janet Stollery*  
Janet Stollery  
Old Coulsdon RA

*Rita Barfoot*  
Rita Barfoot  
Coulsdon West RA

*Charles King*  
Charles King  
East Coulsdon RA

*Chris Stanley*  
Chris Stanley  
Kenley & District RA

*Phil Reed*  
Phil Reed  
Purley & Woodcote RA

*Dennis King*  
Dennis King  
Sanderstead RA

*Phil Thomas*  
Phil Thomas  
Riddlesdown RA

cc. Dr Anthony Brzezcki, Chair, Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group; Vanessa Hosford, Acting Chair, Healthwatch Croydon; Charlie Ladyman, CEO, Healthwatch Croydon; John Goulston, CE, Croydon NHS Trust; Simon Stephens CE, NHS England.