

7 December 2020

To the Council of Governors of the Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust,

I am writing to you, as Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, to ask the Council of Governors to defer to next spring any decision to approve the merger application between your Trust and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. I understand that an emergency meeting of the Council of Governors is due to take place on Tuesday 15 December 2020 to consider the application.

At the special meeting of the Council's Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee on 19 November 2020, held solely to review the proposed merger, we listened to a range of views and positions expressed by our residents and Councillors, as well as those expressed by representatives of your Trust and Guy's and St Thomas' Trust, NHSE, relevant North West London health partners and local patient representatives. We were impressed by the evidence that the Royal Brompton Hospital is a world class centre of excellence for treatment and research where the relationships that make this possible are threatened by absorption into a much larger organisation.

As a result of what we heard at this meeting, we are extremely concerned that taking a decision to approve the merger application at this time would be premature. Making this decision now would not allow adequate time to fully address our serious reservations or those expressed by your own health and research partners.

We acknowledge that there is no statutory requirement for the Trust to consult on the decision to merge with Guy's and St Thomas's. We also understand, having heard from Dr Richard Grocott-Mason, Mr Robert Craig, and Professor Ian Abbs, that the Trust anticipates it will remain, and several services will continue to be provided, at the current site for a decade. Nevertheless, having fully considered all the evidence presented to us, the Select Committee strongly believes that deferring this decision would be in the best health interest of our local population and of that of North West London as a whole. We are concerned that the Trust intends to take this decision at a time when services and staff may be strained because of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. A deferral will demonstrate that Trust listens to its key stakeholders.

We believe that the Trust should –before making any decision— take the necessary time to:

- undertake an impact analysis study of the effect on services provided to patients and of the impact of the merger for its staff.
- provide further assurances, to us and to its health partners in North West London, within a clear timescale that:
 - the long-established and highly valued North West London clinical collaborative networks of specialist cardiovascular, cancer and respiratory medicine and care; and
 - the academic and research collaboration –deeply entwined with clinical collaboration— that has led to significant improvements in adult and paediatric care and to achieving national and international academic impact –to a great extent due to collocation between the Trust and research institutions;

both of which could be put at risk by the merger and potential subsequent relocations, will be preserved and further developed to meet the health needs of local children and adults and the development needs of staff (in your Trust and in other North West London Trusts). Above all, that this existing collaboration is not only preserved in the short term but also, of critical importance, in the medium and long-term future.

- provide assurances that a more productive dialogue and engagement would be opened with local patients, directly and/or via its representative bodies, such as the local Healthwatch.

We seek assurances that a merger between two excellent Trusts –that, as we heard, are two of only five centres in the country that provide extra corporeal membrane oxygenation; two of only three Trusts providing interstitial lung disease services in London, and two of just three severe asthma hubs in London— will not be rushed. We wish to be reassured that it will neither lead to a decrease in access to services for our local population nor have a negative impact to the clinical and research resources and provision for local people in our borough and in North West London.

Yours sincerely,
Cllr Marwan Elnaghi
Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea