

The Editor,
Ealing Gazette,
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Dear Editor

Time for Ealing Southall MP and the Labour Group to Act over Stroke Unit Closure in Ealing

On 20th July the Joint Committee of PCTs (JCPCT) voted to close Ealing Hospital's Stroke Unit as part of the re-configuration of major trauma and stroke services in the acute sector in London.

The case, during consultation period, to keep the stroke unit at Ealing Hospital has been made overwhelmingly. The Ipsos MORI, the consultants engaged by the healthcare for London have analysed that:

- Of the people who responded to the consultation most were from Ealing
- 53% Ealing respondents disagreed with Healthcare for London's (hfl) proposals and wanted to keep stroke unit at Ealing Hospital
- Ealing Council, the relevant Council Scrutiny Committee and Ealing Hospital itself made submissions to the Committee to save the Stroke Unit.
- I personally organised a petition of 1,862 residents pointing out that Ealing Hospital has a top quartile performing stroke unit and that residents will be forced to travel unacceptable distances to use poorer performing facilities if this plan is implemented.
- An on line petition signed by 34 residents, Southall Chamber of Commerce's petition signed by 243 residents, representation by faith groups made to keep the stroke unit at Ealing Hospital all signal strong local feeling toward the hospital.
- Ealing residents were significantly more likely than other residents to mention a need for Ealing Hospital to retain its stroke services (41%). Those employed by the NHS were also more likely to offer this as an explanation for their disagreement (19%).

Key themes – additional responses

- Around one in twenty (five percent) of the respondents who made 'additional responses' were opposed to the closure of the stroke unit at Ealing Hospital

Typical Responses from Ealing

Extreme difficulty of access for visitation and re-enablement provision for local residents in Southall and Central West Ealing will result from the planned closure.

The proposed sites for stroke; Hillingdon, West Middlesex, Northwick Park and Charing Cross are in direct conflict with the HfL strategy for the people of Ealing: to localise wherever possible

London Borough of Ealing

Ealing Hospital NHS Trust

The majority of respondents were of the view that the criteria on which decision was going to be made was set against Ealing. This was amply clear by replies to a question in the consultation paper, which I reproduce below

Question: Do you agree or disagree with the criteria of the consultation?

'Residents from Ealing (38%) were more likely to disagree with the criteria on which decisions will be made.....'

In reality if there is no Stroke Unit at Ealing, Ealing residents will be sent from the HASU to Hillingdon or West Middlesex for stroke care, even when they have had no previous contact with these hospitals. The proposed HASUs at Charing Cross and Northwick Park have already expressed concerns about their ability to repatriate Ealing residents in a timely fashion if there is no stroke unit at Ealing Hospital

I welcome the fact that NHS Ealing now acknowledges that "North West London now needs to plan for a larger number of Stroke Unit beds than initially calculated and that discussions need to be held with local trusts about how the additional capacity can be provided". In light of this, the vote to de-commission Ealing Hospital seems all the more perverse.

It is clear from the report that the responses to the consultation have been ignored and the consultation itself was flawed in the sense that 38% of Ealing residents disagreed with the criteria.

It is also unfortunate that the local NHS representative, Mr. Phil Portwood supported and voted the closure of the Stroke Unit at Ealing Hospital. It is odd watching a former Labour Councillor and ex Mayor of the London Borough of Ealing, effectively signing the death warrant for Ealing as an acute hospital. Still nothing surprises me any more when it comes to the local Labour party

And what of our MP? Virendra Sharma has not made any public representation to Health care for London to keep the stroke unit at Ealing Hospital. He invited the then Health secretary, Alan Johnson to Ealing and yet made no mention of stroke unit in his press release; he asked no question at Prime Minister's question time about the stroke unit when the opportunity presented itself.

So we have no lobbying of the Prime Minister, no mention of the Health Secretary's engagement. Is there in fact anything being done at all by the elected member for Ealing Southall? The little interest he has shown in the stroke unit has been about saving his own skin in Southall. Any other view is in conflict with the facts. People should know who to call if the unit actually closes.

We all know who will make the final decision – like all major decisions in the NHS the ultimate decision-maker will be the Department for Health. Accordingly

I have, on 27th July, written to the Secretary of State for Health for a meeting so that we can, supported by others, put forward our views to him directly. All those who doubt my commitment to the people of Southall now have their answer.

Cllr. Gurcharan Singh
Conservative Parliamentary Candidate
Ealing Southall