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Wednesday 7 March 2012

Councillor Sandra Kabir  
Chair, Health Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Brent Council, Brent Town Hall  
Forty Lane  
Wembley  
Middlesex HA9 9HD

Dear Councillor Kabir

**Proposed merger of Ealing Hospital NHS Trust and The North West London Hospitals NHS Trust**

Thank you for your letter dated 16 February regarding the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee's response to the proposed merger of The North West London Hospitals NHS Trust and Ealing Hospital NHS Trust.

Can I firstly take this opportunity to thank you and your panel members for engaging with us on the proposals and enabling us to have thorough discussions about the proposed merger. We look forward to continuing to work with you as we move forward.

I note the issues you raise and that your members understand the clinical and financial reasons driving the merger proposal. We also believe a merged organisation has a greater chance of meeting the quality requirements and standards patients and commissioners will expect in the future.

I was not planning on addressing all the specific issues you raise in your letter, given that these have been discussed previously, but I would like to re-iterate our commitment to ensuring that any transport and access issues which arise from the merger are adequately addressed.

In terms of your concerns relating to Northwick Park Hospital's ability to cope with any additional patients as a result of the merger, you will appreciate there are no current plans to transfer significant numbers of patients as a result of the merger. NWLH is, however, in the process of implementing a number of measures to improve capacity as a result of recent increases in demand for emergency services and also the development of more specialist services such as stroke.

For example, the Trust is looking at how it can transfer more work to Central Middlesex to free up capacity at Northwick Park Hospital and is opening a new re-modelled 24/7 urgent care centre at Northwick Park Hospital. The Trust has also recently been successful in securing provisional agreement for additional capital monies, subject to submission of a business case, to enable building improvements to the Northwick Park A&E department.

Whilst the merger is not making the case for significant services changes, I hope the above provides assurance regarding measures being taken now to improve capacity at the Northwick Park Hospital site.

I note you raise the issue of an equality impact assessment and I can confirm that an initial equality analysis has been carried out on the Outline Business Case (OBC) and will be included in supporting documentation of the Full Business Case (FBC). In the lead up to the merger, a full equality impact assessment will also be carried out on the FBC.

We are aiming to present the FBC to both Trust Boards at the end of March. Your letter will be included in the supporting papers submitted to the Boards as part of the consideration process. Subject to approval by the two Trust Boards, the FBC will then be submitted to NHS London and the Department of Health for final approval, along with all the stakeholder letters we have received.

We will of course ensure that you are sent a link to our websites once a copy of the FBC becomes publicly available and would also welcome the opportunity to discuss the business case at one of your future meetings which is in the process of being organised.

Yours sincerely,



**Peter Coles**  
**Interim Chief Executive**

cc. Julie Lowe CEO, Ealing Hospital NHS Trust and Simon Crawford, SRO for Organisational Futures Programme