

**RISHI SUNAK MP**

**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

**LONDON SW1A 0AA**

4th July 2017

Siobhan McArdle

CEO, South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Marton Road

Middlesbrough

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Dear Siobhan,

**Constituency Office: Unit 1, Omega Business Village, Northallerton, DL6 2NJ**

**Telephone: 01609 765330 Email:rishi.sunak.mp@parliament.uk**

Thank you for your time last week. I appreciated the open dialogue and constructive approach.

Further to our meeting, I have also met with doctors and nurses from the Friarage and spoken to many others about the current situation. I have also raised this matter in Parliament and the Minister of State for Health has agreed to meet with me to discuss this issue further. My thoughts are outlined below and I would be grateful for your urgent attention.

1. **REDOUBLE RECRUITMENT EFFORTS FOR URGENT CARE DOCTORS AND ANAESTHETISTS**

As you explained, our local services are at risk because of an inability to fill various vacancies. Many people, myself included, will find it hard to believe that there is nobody, anywhere in the world (qualified to British medical standards), willing to work at the Friarage in these roles. I would urge you to urgently redouble your recruitment efforts, look both nationally and internationally, and use more innovative search techniques.

The current medical team can attest that the Friarage is a rewarding place to work and North Yorkshire is established as a great place to live and raise a family. Sitting on the outside, it is not clear that the Trust has genuinely done absolutely everything it can to find the doctors we need.

1. **ADOPT A SYSTEM WIDE APPROACH TO STAFFING BETWEEN THE JAMES COOK AND FRIARGE**

Both hospitals are part of a single trust. As such, the Trust should be taking a system wide approach to staffing. The Trust should look at how James Cook medical rotas can be altered to ensure adequate staffing at the Friarage. Although both hospitals are stretched, the situation is much more serious at the Friarage and this deserves particular attention.

My understanding is that the vast majority of contracts for South Tees doctors at James Cook allow for medical rotas to be split between the two hospitals. Indeed, it is surprising to me and others that this has not been more explicitly the case and enforced already. There is already informal covering of Friarage rotas by James Cook doctors so this is clearly not an impossible ask.

1. **ADOPT A MORE FLEXIBLE APPROACH THAT RECOGNISES THE NEEDS OF A RURAL HOSPITAL**

I understand there are various guidelines governing the exact nature of medical cover required in various departments and circumstances; the extra specialties that doctors have created complicates staffing rotas. However, the impression given is that the Trust uses these guidelines as an excuse not to be more innovative and flexible in solving the staffing problem. Where possible, I hope the Trust can recognise that these are in general “guidelines”, not hard and fast rules, and they should be adapted to the specific situation we find ourselves in.

As a small example, I am led to believe that a large number of out-of-hours services at hospitals across the country are run without “intensivists”. If it is possible elsewhere then it should be possible at the Friarage too, especially with ready phone and internet access to the James Cook hospital.

1. **COMMIT TO A SUBSTANTIVE POSITIVE VISION FOR THE FRIARAGE AND COMMUNICATE IT**

It is very clear that part of the issue in recruiting new medical staff is the perceived uncertainty about the Friarage’s future. I have been told repeatedly by the Trust that they have a positive vision for the Friarage as a beacon of rural health. If this is the case, then the message is not getting through. It should be backed up with tangible, substantive actions by the Trust that would demonstrate to would-be applicants a genuine commitment to enhancing the services at the Friarage.

For example, the Friarage is already operating effectively and well utilised with respect to elective surgery and clinics. Perhaps by diverting future capital investment from the James Cook to the Friarage, in the future more elective surgery could be done at the Friarage instead. The direction of travel should not all be one way from North Yorkshire to Teesside. This new capacity could also potentially attract new patients from further south, bringing extra financial resources to the Trust. This is just one idea, and there are likely others you can also pursue. In general, there must be ways for the Trust to demonstrate a real commitment to the Friarage which will then make it easier to recruit staff.

With the planned addition of 1,000 new homes in Northallerton and hundreds at Catterick Garrison, all with associated healthcare demand, expanding capacity at the Friarage seems a very practical step to explore.

1. **ENSURE PROPER REPRESENTATION OF THE FRIARAGE AT SOUTH TEES MANAGEMENT**

It is incredibly worrying that this situation has been left to develop to a critical point without being addressed sooner. The general feeling amongst staff at the Friarage is that for too long there has not been a strong voice batting for the interests of the Friarage at the various levels of South Tees management.

It is simply unacceptable for the Trust to view the Friarage as an inconvenience that either through simple neglect or deliberate inaction, will cease to become an issue over time. I understand that Adrian Clements now has a role representing the Friarage on the Board, but this is a relatively recent phenomenon. I would urge you to look hard at every level of management and governance at South Tees and ensure somebody is in a position to passionately, personally and professionally represent the needs of the Friarage.

South Tees Trust has a responsibility to the people of North Yorkshire to provide a good range of high quality services accessible at their local hospital. Right now, it is hard to see how the Trust is fulfilling that obligation. People are reasonable - my constituents have already understood the need for trauma, stroke and cardiac cases to go to James Cook. Then, against their will, they have seen maternity and paediatric services at the Friarage downgraded and have had to make do. But now, we have reached a point where enough is enough.

I urge you in the strongest possible terms to solve this problem and ensure the successful future of the Friarage. It may well require difficult decisions elsewhere for you. But here at the Friarage we have experienced plenty of those already and now deserve to see the Trust making things work for us here. I very much hope you can make this happen.

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me and for engaging in a constructive fashion. I am most grateful.

Kind regards,

**Rishi Sunak**

Cc: Adrian Clements

Janet Probert

**Tuesday 4 July 2017**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT  
  
(HANSARD)**

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr Philip Dunne):** I am aware that my hon. Friend has taken a strong interest in the number of consultants and anaesthetists available at the Friarage Hospital. I will be happy to meet him to discuss his concerns in person.

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**Rishi Sunak (Richmond (Yorks)) (Con):** Last week I met doctors and nurses at the Friarage, an excellent small hospital serving a rural population spread over 1,000 square miles. Will my right hon. Friend urge South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to do everything it can to ensure the continued provision of emergency care clinicians and anaesthetists at this vital local hospital?