

PRESS RELEASE

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WHAT A TERRIBLE WASTE OF MONEY WHEN IT IS IN SHORT SUPPLY

Dorset CCG have proposed to close Poole A&E, community hospitals and beds in an attempt to save money against the backdrop of £22bn cuts. An issue that makes it particularly difficult to engage with the proposals is the amount of public money that has been spent in an attempt to deny reality.

It is difficult to see how services can be brought 'closer to home' by proposals to close one of three Dorset A&E's, to close one of three Dorset Maternity Services and downgrade another, and to close hospitals or hospital beds in six of thirteen Dorset Community Hospitals. These proposals mean that journey times to access services will be increased for many Dorset residents.

The loss of Poole A&E and Maternity, and the downgrading of Dorset County Maternity, means that in an emergency many residents will face journey times to Royal Bournemouth Hospital far in excess of recommended 'safe' times. The Travel Times Analysis commissioned by the CCG in March 2015 names the 'safe' journey time in maternity emergency, major trauma or acute stroke as just 30-45 minutes. The Analysis identified the proposals would lead to much longer journey times than those claimed in the Consultation document, and named Poole as the best location for the Emergency Hospital in the East.

In an emergency, any increase in journey times increases the risk of fatality. It also increases the risk of lives lived in disability.

Due to public and media concern about travel times, the CCG commissioned another report from South West Ambulance Trust. This report 'dealt' with the issue of the longer journeys that many Dorset residents will face if the Emergency Hospital is located at Royal Bournemouth, by offsetting these against the shorter journey times for many Bournemouth residents.

However, this is a false comparison that takes no account of safe travel times in an emergency. Bournemouth residents are able to get to Poole General in an emergency within recommended safe times. The longer journeys for many Dorset residents to Royal Bournemouth are outside recommended safe times.

Another company commissioned by the CCG, Opinion Research Services (ORS), have also had to work very hard to deny the overwhelming public opposition to the CCG proposals.

In order to claim that the public support the CCG proposals, when they manifestly do not, ORS have discounted 75,570 petition signatures against the CCG proposals. That's right - the views of 10% of the population of Dorset have been written off.

Yet less than 3% of the population of Dorset actually completed the CCG's Consultation Questionnaire, and in many cases the majority of the 3% opposed the CCG's proposals.

For example, the CCG proposal in the East is to reduce A&Es and Maternity's from two to one, and for the one to be located at Royal Bournemouth, close to the Hampshire border.

36,910 people signed petitions to Save Poole A&E and Maternity.

Only 10,624 people completed the Consultation question on this issue, less than a third of those who signed petitions to Save Poole A&E and Maternity. Of this 10,624, neither the people who wanted the Emergency Hospital to be at Poole (3,923), nor those who chose 'another option' (2,004) agreed with the CCG's proposal for one emergency site at Royal Bournemouth. So 5,927 completing the questionnaire opposed this proposal. Just 4,697 agreed with it.

In order to claim that the Consultation responses support the CCG's proposal for one A&E and Maternity in the East at Royal Bournemouth, ORS have had to discount 36,910 petition signatures and 5,927 questionnaire respondents! Yes that's right - a total of 42,837 responses have been discounted!

One can only guess at the costs of the CCG Consultation, the Travel Times Analysis, the South West Ambulance Trust Report and the Opinion Research Services Report. Most of this public money, money that is desperately needed for our Dorset NHS services, has been paid to private consultants to persuade the Dorset public that losing our hospital services is a good thing.

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