



Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Defend Our NHS Press Release 5th October 2016

Future Fit: Dead in the water?

The Future Fit programme has surely now passed its sell-by date.

A year ago, the Future Fit Programme Board was set to agree which hospital services it would put where. In October 2015, every single option was declared 'unaffordable' by NHS England. By rights, Future Fit should have died then.

'I don't think the project has been a failure', insisted CCG boss David Evans in October 2015, admitting that the cost of Future Fit would be £3 millionⁱ. Future Fit lurched on. For the last year, the original Future Fit vision of 'care closer to home' has been increasingly battered. Shropshire CCG admitted in March this year that the money for investment in new community services had goneⁱⁱ, although the 30% transfer of hospital services to the community was to continue. In June this year, health bosses confirmed that plans for Rural Urgent Care Centres had been droppedⁱⁱⁱ. Future Fit was reduced to closing an A&E and acute care at one hospital, and taking away planned care services at the other – while slashing overall spending on hospital care and hoping that GPs could somehow absorb all the extra work.

And today even that is in doubt, with the sudden announcement of a further delay of a month. This follows the threat of a judicial review by Telford and Wrekin Council of the plan to close the A&E and Women's and Children's Centre in Telford. The delay means a growing chance that Future Fit will be abandoned altogether, missing its tight deadlines for consultation, and collapsing into chaos.

Gill George, speaking for Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Defend Our NHS, said:

'It's time to call a halt to this nonsense. No one will mourn for Future Fit. It's become a shambolic mess, and we're long past the point where it should be abandoned altogether. Will health bosses now apologise for the millions of pounds wasted on the attempt to kid us that the Future Fit cuts programme was about better patient care?'

She added:

'The trouble is, Future Fit falling apart does nothing to solve the funding crisis locally. Future Fit is just a part of a bigger cuts package called the 'Sustainability and Transformation Plan' – and that's about pushing through close to £150 million cuts to NHS spending every single year. And on top of that, we've got a hospital trust that's saying it can't afford to manage winter pressures at both our hospitals this coming winter^{iv} – and already hinting it will close down one of our A&Es and acute hospitals anyway. We'll still get the cuts, quite possibly with snap decisions being taken by the hospital trust, and no pretence at all of accountability and transparency. Neither A&E is safe.'

'In February 2014, Jeremy Hunt visited Telford and guaranteed that we would keep both our A&Es, at the Princess Royal Hospital *and* the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. We urgently need our MPs to remind Mr Hunt of that. We also need our MPs to admit that our local NHS is under-funded, and to fight for the money that we need to keep local NHS services going. Can MPs really keep insisting everything's fine while hospital chiefs say they don't have the cash to deal with sick people this

winter? We're heading for an absolute disaster in local healthcare, and NHS cuts are at the heart of it'.

For further information, please contact Gill George on 07900 411 769 or gill@gillgeorge.net

ⁱ <http://www.shropshirestar.com/news/2015/10/03/boss-of-future-fit-rules-out-apology-over-shropshire-ae-shake-up-delay/>

ⁱⁱ Letter from Helen Herritty, then Chair of Shropshire CCG, to Gill George. 18th March 2016

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.shropshirestar.com/news/health/2016/06/13/future-fit-no-new-rural-care-centres-to-be-built-if-one-shropshire-ae-closes/>

^{iv} <http://www.shropshirestar.com/news/health/2016/10/02/shropshires-hospitals-facing-crisis-over-winter-pressures/>