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## Maintaining safe, effective and dignified Urgent and Emergency Care Services

Patients and staff at Shropshire's two acute hospitals—and across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and mid Wales—are being asked for their views on how the Trust which runs them can maintain services in a safe, effective and dignified way while awaiting the outcome of the NHS Future Fit Programme.

NHS Future Fit, which will define the shape of healthcare for generations to come, was launched because the current model of care is not sustainable in the long-term.

But as we await the outcome of that programme, The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust (SaTH), which runs the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford and the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, is taking all possible steps to ensure we can keep services running safely and effectively for the 500,000 people we serve across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and mid Wales.

However, listening to our Doctors, Nurses and other health professionals in A&E and also in acute medicine, critical care and other specialties, we know how fragile some of our services are.

Our first duty of care is to our patients, and therefore it is vital that we have contingencies in place should the continued safe, effective and dignified running of these services become unsustainable because there are not enough staff to provide a safe service 24-hours a day in two A&E departments. It is common with many other acute trusts across the country, one immediate

measure could be the temporary overnight closure of one of our A&E departments. We need to consider this and other options carefully.

This is not a decision that would be taken lightly and, indeed, the main focus of our work is to prevent the need for any significant changes before NHS Future Fit reaches its conclusions.

Instead, our goal is that any changes should be made in a planned way based on agreements through the NHS Future Fit programme following widespread public consultation next year.

But NHS Future Fit is due to conclude in Spring 2017 and, given the fragility of some of our clinical services, it would be irresponsible of us not to fully explore the contingency measures that might be needed if our service reaches a tipping point where it was no longer possible to maintain two safe A&E Departments.

We need to make sure that our services remain safe over the next 18 months NHS Future Fit concludes.

This means that over the coming months, SaTH Board members will be talking to staff, partners and with communities about the best way forward.

In particular, there are a number of questions that we are looking at:

- What situations might constitute a "tipping point" within an Emergency Department which would mean the service could not be maintained in its current format?
- What further steps can we take to prevent tipping points being reached?
- If a tipping point was reached, what scenarios could be considered?
- What impact would those scenarios have on patients and communities and on other services inside and outside our hospitals?

We want to take into account as many thoughts and opinions as possible. If you have any views on these issues we would love to hear from you. You can share your thoughts by emailing [consultation@sath.nhs.uk](mailto:consultation@sath.nhs.uk) or writing to the Chief Operating Officer at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Mytton Oak Road, Shrewsbury, SY3 8XQ or at the Princess Royal Hospital, Apley Castle, Telford, TF1 6TF.

More information is available from our website at [www.sath.nhs.uk/bcp](http://www.sath.nhs.uk/bcp)