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**Sent:** 20 October 2015 10:48  
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**Cc:** Osborne Adrian (Communications Director) <Adrian.Osborne@sath.nhs.uk>  
**Subject:** Letter from Simon Wright, Brigid Stacey and David Evans

STARTS

Dear Colleagues

We are writing to confirm that there are categorically no plans in place to close an A&E department as part of our winter planning.

It is clear that there has been a great deal of misunderstanding around local A&E departments and their future. We would like to take this opportunity to clarify the current position and the next steps.

Let's first remind ourselves why we set out on the NHS Future Fit journey to begin with. Firstly, in common with NHS organisations up and down the country, we face immense challenges in recruiting the skilled medical staff needed for the vital and highly skilled work that takes place in A&E departments and the other hospital teams that work alongside them.

Secondly, we must ensure that our plans for health and care meet the changing needs of our patients and communities, particularly as many of us are living longer with long term conditions.

Thirdly, every day it becomes more and more challenging to maintain services in their current configuration. Clinicians working together in the NHS Future Fit programme agree that the best and safest way to keep vital services in the county for the most life-threatening illnesses and injuries is through a network of urgent care centres supporting a single emergency centre. This would maintain high quality local urgent care services whilst bringing together skilled doctors, nurses, therapists, scientists and much more besides, to give all of us the best life chances following major injuries or serious illness. The need for change has always been driven by our goal to provide the best possible care and outcomes for our patients.

A lot of great work has been done through NHS Future Fit; this along with the process ahead will ensure the public voice alongside detailed clinical appraisal is giving us the best insights and views on which to base a firm and lasting decision.

One thing is certain – the need for a network of urgent care centres supported by a single emergency centre remains. We must find a solution to this problem that preceded the NHS Future Fit programme and has beset our communities for decades.

We all want to deliver the solution in a planned way, rather than having to put in place

contingency measures in response to safety concerns. It is categorically not the case that there is a plan in place to close an A&E department as part of our winter planning. It is clear, however, that this debate must continue. The NHS Future Fit programme began more than two years ago with the 'Call to Action', which was launched because of the challenges we faced then, and still face, locally. Every day we are managing those challenges and everything we do is focused on making improvements in a planned way, rather than having to respond in a crisis.

What happens next must be driven by our shared goals of delivering the best services and outcomes for all of our patients and communities. We have got to be realistic about where we are. The challenges we face are real – every day doctors, nurses and the managers who support them are working hard to deliver great care in way that simply isn't fit for the future.

We want to be in a position within months, not years, to make a decision on the future of emergency and urgent care services based on wide-spread public consultation. The way we do this must recognise the needs and challenges of all of our communities, from rural isolation to urban deprivation.

We are working together to complete the programme of work identified at the NHS Future Fit Programme Board, with public consultation taking place during 2016. This means that we can soon be clear on a definitive way forward, which in turn will allow us to deliver the future both quickly and safely for all our patients and communities across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and mid Wales.

We will be sharing more detail before the end of October about how this work will be taken forward. In the meantime we look forward to continuing to work with you to create the shape of health and care for future generations.

Yours sincerely

Simon Wright  
Chief Executive, The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust

David Evans  
Chief Officer, Telford & Wrekin CCG

Brigid Stacey  
Acting Accountable Officer, Shropshire CCG

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