

## Southampton, Hampshire Isle of Wight & Portsmouth

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Dear Colleague,

You may have seen the recent coverage in The News about the proposals for vascular surgery at Queen Alexandra Hospital. I am concerned that the articles have focused on just one of the ideas that we are exploring for vascular surgery and would like to take this opportunity to provide some reassurance about how the local NHS will be working up proposals and involving local people in this.

You will have had a chance to look through the document upon which our current engagement activity is based – *Developing Safe and Sustainable Services in South Central*. This is intended to give people an indication of how and why the proposals for stroke, major trauma and vascular services that have been put forward for discussion have been developed.

At the moment we are in discussion with vascular surgeons at Queen Alexandra Hospital, Southampton General Hospital and St Richards Hospital, as well as with local GPs about the best way to deliver vascular services to the local population. Nothing has been decided.

The purpose of the discussion period that is currently underway is to hear the views of local people, whether they are patients, clinicians or members of the public, and use these to help develop formal proposals which will form part of a formal consultation process.

The NHS always conducts formal public consultation on major service changes and you can be assured that any changes to the way vascular services are delivered will be no exception to this.

However, it is my view that local people do need to be made aware of the very strong clinical evidence that hospitals which perform high volumes of specialist operations have better outcomes, including mortality rates, than those which do not. This is a key element of the discussion document.

Ultimately, the more operations the surgical team perform, the more expertise it garners and the better the results for patients. As our aim is to make sure that local people have the best possible care and the best possible chance of a full recovery we must consider this evidence, too, alongside local opinion as part of the engagement process.

The service specification for vascular surgery (based on national guidance and with input from clinicians) stipulates that six surgeons and six radiologists are required to fulfil a 7 day a week 24/7 emergency rota. Portsmouth has four surgeons, two of whom specialise in vascular work, and five radiologists (not all of whom specialise in vascular surgery).

In order to meet these standards locally three ideas are currently being explored. The one that has been featured in The News proposes:

1. to move emergency vascular surgery to Southampton General but retain other vascular surgery and procedures at QA. In reality this will mean QA's vascular surgeons would become part of the emergency rota at the General, and people from the Portsmouth area who need emergency vascular surgery would be taken to Southampton. There would still be vascular surgeons at QA treating day cases and supporting other planned operations for conditions such as cancer.

However there are two other ideas that have been put forward and are currently being explored (as outlined in the discussion document). We are keen to obtain feedback on these from local people as they might offer viable alternatives to the option above and may well be more acceptable to local people.

The ideas being explored are:

2. for vascular surgeons at QA to cover the Portsmouth area and also the Chichester area. This would allow the team to do more procedures and meet the SHA's service standards. However there is a similar review of vascular surgery underway in Sussex and we would need to take account of the views of that health community, and the wider population that it serves.
3. for some of the planned complex work to stay at QA, with the emergency operations being carried out at Southampton General. The two hospital Trusts are currently in discussion about this option and we hope that The News campaign will highlight this option and support the two Trusts to continue working collaboratively in meeting the needs of local people.

I hope that you will be able to support us by bringing all three proposals to the attention of your local networks and local residents.

I also hope that this letter provides assurance that no change will be introduced without full public consultation.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D.M. Fleming', written in a cursive style.

**D.M. Fleming (Mrs)**  
**Chief Executive**  
**SHIP PCT Cluster**