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HOUSE OF COMMONS

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Mr Tim Smart
King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Denmark Hill
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Dear Tim,

Thank you to you and your colleagues for meeting with my two parliamentary colleagues and me to discuss the re-development of King's Emergency Department in February. As I said at the time, I found the meeting positive and constructive.

I am now writing to provide my response to the consultation. I have copied this to the email address: edconsultation@kch.nhs.uk

I very much welcome the opportunity that the local Trusts are taking to re-develop the Emergency Department (ED). I feel it will certainly be the case that, for the vast majority of patients, their visit to the ED will be a better experience than at present.

I welcome the repositioning of the entrance away from busy Denmark Hill onto the main site. I also feel that the new system of 'meet and greet' and rapid assessment by a senior nurse, which you will remember we were able to witness in action, is an important step forward. Similarly, providing smaller waiting areas will be more pleasant for patients and will assist staff in managing the ED more effectively. I think that, in general, the provision of the quiet and private cubicles will also be welcomed by many patients and may reduce the stress that a visit to an ED inevitably entails.

My area of concern however, remains the provision of services for patients with mental health needs. It must be remembered that this re-development is being carried out in the context of the closure of the Maudsley Emergency Clinic. I am unconvinced that the Health Secretary's requirement for the *'creation of a designated space at King's College Hospital, adjacent to A&E, which will provide a safe and segregated area for mental health service users who require assessment'* has been met.

My understanding is that mental health service users are of the view that there remains a requirement for a quiet and segregated area where they feel safe and where there is someone present to monitor and support them. I do not feel that the quiet, private cubicles meet this requirement as patients are more likely to remain alone and isolated in the cubicle rather than in a supportive environment with appropriate help readily on hand.

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I welcome the provision of the Psychiatric Liaison Nurses (PLN) within the ED but I feel that their presence might be integrated within the physical environment of the ED in a way that will fulfil the Health Secretary's requirements. I also understand that, despite the presence of the PLN teams, referral to an appropriate unit following assessment often requires a substantial wait. If the clinical pathway through the ED and beyond is likely to be lengthy for mental health service users, the provision of a space where they feel safe becomes even more important.

Under the current proposals, there will be no 'designated space' that recreates the environment that was previously available to mental health service users at the Maudsley 24 Hour Emergency Clinic. Out of hours, mental health service users in crisis are currently advised to attend the ED. If they feel that the environment in the ED is not conducive to their well-being they simply will not attend.

I do hope that it will be possible to modify the plans to ensure that the huge and welcome investment in the ED will deliver a service of the highest quality to all users and provide a fitting replacement for the Maudsley Emergency Clinic.

Yours sincerely,

Tessa Jowell

Rt. Hon. Tessa Jowell MP