



Factsheet



Children and young people's healthcare (urgent and emergency paediatrics) services



Why do children and young people's urgent and emergency care services in South Tyneside and Sunderland need to change?

Despite the best efforts of our hard-working clinical teams we are facing increasing difficulty in having the right number of experienced, senior medical staff to deliver high quality children and young people's (paediatric) urgent and emergency care. We often have difficulty making sure children are seen by the most senior doctor – a consultant paediatrician – on evenings and at weekends. The lack of availability of senior doctors within our children's hospital services has been highlighted in both Care Quality Commission and coroners' reports.

We have experienced difficulty in recruiting senior doctors and rely on temporary doctors in order to keep our services running. As staff are very stretched, it is also difficult to make sure they get education time that improves their knowledge and skills.

This presents risks to the quality of services which local patients receive. By doing nothing, we face the risk that children will not be diagnosed and treated as quickly as they should be. Patients will continue to receive different levels of care at different times of the day or week and children in need of safeguarding may not be spotted soon enough. It is possible that more children and young people will be admitted to hospital unnecessarily and that planned children's operations will be cancelled as doctors cover more urgent and emergency care shifts.

Another reason for changing our services is that we know children's urgent and emergency services at South Tyneside District Hospital are used very little overnight, with an average of nine patients between 8pm and 8am daily. The national Urgent and Emergency Care Strategy is also telling us to change services so that we offer locally accessible urgent care supported by specialist emergency care.

continues 

What difference will these changes make to the people of South Tyneside and Sunderland?

The majority of children and young people will notice little change to the way they use urgent and emergency care services. Between six to eight out of every ten South Tyneside patients will continue to be treated at their local hospital or another appropriate local urgent care service, as may be advised after ringing NHS 111. Sunderland patients who go to Sunderland Royal Hospital will be treated in the paediatric Emergency Department. South Tyneside patients who go to South Tyneside District Hospital will be treated either in the Paediatric Emergency Department or the Paediatric Minor Injury or Ailment service, depending on which option is chosen.

Children and young people with more serious, emergency complaints – from across both South Tyneside and Sunderland - will benefit most from the proposed changes. By bringing our clinical teams together we can ensure that children are diagnosed and treated by senior doctors sooner. Families will have access to high quality care at all times of the day and week with support from other specialised children's services.

Children and young people from South Tyneside will only travel further for what are likely to be one-off episodes of the most specialised care, with all follow-up care available in local hospital outpatient clinics and community venues. We will also be able to provide new children's clinics at South Tyneside District Hospital such as diabetes, epilepsy and neurodisability clinics, enhancing outpatients services so that as much routine care as possible is provided locally. Find out more about the proposed changes and have your say on the two proposed options at our dedicated website

www.pathtoexcellence.org.uk

