

17 March 2017

Merger of Manchester NHS Trusts

1. Your publicity about this matter says "The CMA is inviting views on the anticipated merger between 2 hospital trusts in central Manchester." This is misleading. Only one of these trusts is in central Manchester.
2. Your issues statement is so badly written as to be incomprehensible. It is packed with newly created acronyms.
3. The evidence that competitive markets have a beneficial effect on the quality of service in the NHS is very weak. The evidence shows in almost every speciality that better results are achieved by concentrating specialists in fewer larger centres.
4. There is a serious shortage of clinical staff in many specialities so that it is impossible to meet clinical guidelines, especially for continuous consultant cover, in multiple centres. There clearly is competition between the trust for staff. You don't mention that issue in your consultation document, but it is clearly causing serious problems in North Manchester which is less prestigious than the other two hospitals.
5. There is a serious shortage of money. Concentrating expertise in fewer centres is likely to result, in the long term, in savings.
6. I and my family have used the services of both the affected hospitals for the last 32 years. I have been an elected public governor of both of them, and an active member of the various patient involvement mechanisms which have been established in that time. We have never seen any evidence of active competition on quality between them. There are already well established clinical relationships between them, and also with the Christie and Salford Royal hospitals. These relationships would be considerably improved if there were shared patient records between the different organisations. Merger may help here.
7. The only overt competition that has happened between the two Trusts recently has been in respect of tendering for the management of services in Trafford. There is no evidence of benefit for patients as a result of that competition - nor indeed that most patients were aware of it.
8. There has never been any possibility of competition between providers in community services, which are organised on an area basis. The proposal to procure all services outside hospital from one organisation is sensible, because at present patients have great difficulty if they attempt to cross between the catchment areas of North, South and Central Manchester - lines which are completely invisible to them. The merger of the hospitals will assist this project.
9. Competition requires surplus capacity. There isn't any.
10. There is evidence that parents are attracted to the Royal Manchester Childrens' Hospital A&E from a very wide area, presumably because it is often featured on

television. This is wasteful and inappropriate and leads to a poorer service for children in central Manchester.

Martin Rathfelder