Date: 14th November 2017

Re: STPs in London

Dear Mayor of London,

As representatives of health care professionals across London, we are writing to raise significant and longstanding concerns about the ongoing STP process and request that as Mayor of London, you seek assurances from the capital’s STP leadership charged with delivering the proposals.

In London, STPs continue to be light on detail and leave increasing numbers of people in the dark about the future of services. The plans continue to be developed with little transparency, accountability or meaningful engagement, either with clinicians, professional bodies or the public. We are clear that engaging with those who deliver services and those who use them must be cornerstones of the proposals, not afterthoughts.

The findings from the recent King’s Fund and Nuffield Trust report echo many of the criticisms made by healthcare professionals in regards to the STP process: ‘Unachievable’ savings targets, ‘neither desirable nor credible’ reductions in acute bed capacity, a lack of detailed workforce planning and the need for ‘significant investment’ in order to effectively and safely change the way care is delivered. All of these are legitimate concerns that must no longer be ignored.

We continue to be concerned that STPs are increasingly being driven by the need to make savings, and that services may be cut without suitable alternative arrangements being made for those needing care. Whilst the principle of moving care into the community is sound, there is no evidence to suggest that it would be more cost effective. Any redesign done solely through the prism of cost-cutting simultaneously threatens to miss financial targets whilst jeopardising the needs of those requiring access to acute care today and in the near future.

Chronic and historic underfunding of health services, poverty, inequality and the threat of STPs cutting overstretched services even further mean that London’s health landscape continues to be one of the most challenging in the country. As a result, the danger of people being left behind in the redesign of services is very real.
As Mayor of London, we believe you have a unique opportunity - and responsibility - to help protect and guide London’s services through this great change and ensure that the needs of Londoners continue to be met throughout the transition. We would like to see the Mayor’s health inequalities strategy seek to inform, and help realise, the ambitions of STPs in the capital.

As the professional bodies that represent London’s nurses and doctors, we ask that you seek immediate assurances that STP leaders will:

- Commit to meaningfully engage with the healthcare workforce at every stage of the transformation;
- Put transparency at the heart of decision making and publish full details of all proposals;
- Ensure all service changes are supported by clinical evidence;

The aspirations we all share for London will only be met through collaboration and honest engagement.

We would be happy to meet to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

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Cynthia Davis
RCN London Board Chair

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Dr Gary marlow
BMA London Regional Council Chair

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