



## KELLY TOLHURST MP

*Member of Parliament for Rochester and Strood*

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Dear Sir/Madam,

As Member of Parliament for Rochester and Strood within the Medway area, I welcome the decision to amalgamate resources across Kent from six hospitals into three, in a bid to improve hospital-based urgent stroke services in Kent and Midway.

It is widely accepted that the resources for stroke care are currently spread too thinly across Kent, meaning that most hospitals are not meeting the best practice standards and therefore impacting the level of care that can be provided for patients. At present, 24/7 access is not consistently available for those seeking stroke consultants and brain scans and one in three stroke patients are now failing to be scanned within an hour of arrival at hospital.

Consequently, this has meant that no hospital in the county has been able to constantly meet the health standards expected for the care of stroke patients. There are only 11 stroke consultants throughout the whole of Kent.

As Kent's largest and busiest hospital, Medway Maritime Hospital (MMH) is ideally suited to win this selection for investment and to obtain a hyper acute stroke unit (HASU). Medway is the most populous urban area in the South East of England (outside London) and MMH already has a wide range of supporting services for those patients needing stroke treatment and currently cares for the highest number of stroke patients in Kent and Medway.

Additionally, co-located services such as vascular surgery and interventional radiology are already provided by MMH, which makes it ideal in terms of maintaining skills and developing the expertise to become a HASU.

Each of the three proposed hyper acute sites will have an acute stroke unit to give patients expert care after the first 72 hours, as well as a clinic for assessing and treating transient ischaemic attacks (mini-strokes), which requires specialist assessment and treatment. The proposal would see building upgrades, more equipment for hospitals and an increase in staff recruitment. Building on Medway's solid stroke unit would be a logical step forward in focusing resources to better provide hospital-based urgent stroke services in Kent and Medway.

MMH is ideally placed for this next level of investment and development due to the current level of expertise already recognised at MMH and the high level of experience in delivering a hyper-acute service for a number of years. MMH is included in the option with the best travel times for stroke victims - with 80% of patients reaching a HASU within 30 minutes.

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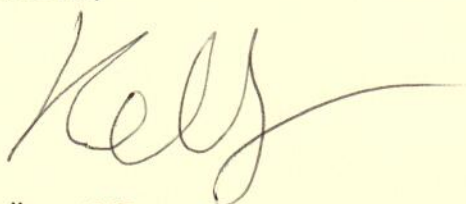
Additionally, MMH remains unique in Kent (and indeed the country) in having an entire dedicated service that specialises in stroke service. MMH is one of the few services that are commissioned that provides the care from acute right through to community from one single team, rather than several handovers/changeovers from team to team.

I also understand that the therapists at MMH have a high level of expertise as they solely treat stroke patients, whereas some therapy teams are set up as Intermediate care teams whenever there is a varied caseload. There also exists a good pathway of care from hospital to community from the perspective of the stroke patient as MMH has experience of delivering stroke specialist rehabilitation at local inpatient rehabilitation units, as well as a community stroke team which encompasses an Early Supported discharge element. Building on this streamlined approach and pathway of care would only serve to improve the delivery of standards for stroke patients and demonstrate commitment to providing the highest level of service for patients across Kent and Medway.

By bringing these services together through the creation of three new HASUs, it will help to deliver better patient care and the centres will be accessible to anyone in need of life-saving emergency treatment. The centres will also be a place to rehabilitate patients who have suffered a stroke – something which is currently lacking with the current service provision.

Having spoken with residents within Rochester and Strood as well as health professionals, I am in full support of Option D, which includes three HASUs at Tunbridge Wells Hospital, Medway Maritime Hospital, William Harvey Hospital. This would spread the three centres across the county evenly and would also ensure that Medway (who has the highest stroke count in Kent) is accounted for.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kelly', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Kelly Tolhurst MP  
Member of Parliament for Rochester and Strood