

# Shrinking Services at Berwick Hospital

## in times past

Berwick Infirmary used to provide so much more. As services have shrunk, year by year, more and more people have had to travel too far, too often, to hospitals further away.

### 2009

A £200m investment was announced for new hospital buildings in the north east; including “plans by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to rebuild Berwick Infirmary” (*Berwick Advertiser* 8<sup>th</sup> September).

### 2014

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust borrowed £25m from Northumberland County Council (what happened to the £200m?) and published the Berwick Infirmary redevelopment plan (4<sup>th</sup> June).

### 2016

The 2014 plan was ‘paused’ (4<sup>th</sup> August). It was supposedly a ‘brief pause’. No one will explain why it was never ‘un-paused’.

### 2018-19

A ‘new’ plan appears for a health/leisure centre with even fewer services still. Public protest (September) secures a stand-alone hospital (November) announced as a rebuild on the Infirmary site (May). The only definite services commitment is that they will be the same as they are now.

## What’s needed now.

1. A rigorous and robust review of the past ten years’ data to assess the increasing impact of:  
**a) referral rates** **b) travel time/cost** for Berwick-based patients directed to access services elsewhere.
2. Further public consultation and engagement focusing firmly on services for patients most affected.

## future?

It seems they will start to monitor travel times only *after* the new hospital has been built; “with a view” to services only *after* it’s already up and running. But a “view” is not a commitment. Why not plan properly for what’s needed right now?

## Making sure it’s right.

Having appropriately accurate data analyses as well as statistically significant survey strategies could already show what services are most needed, right now, as well as for the future. Plans could be properly prepared for the new hospital to provide all that it should as soon as it starts being built.

## AIMS

there is one single aim:

# **A BETTER HOSPITAL FOR BERWICK**



A hospital that provides more services locally; to prevent too many people having to travel too far, too often, to access services at other hospitals further away; services which have been cut back locally, year on year, from Berwick Infirmary, until those local services have reached, now, the lowest level ever.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To secure a stand-alone hospital on its own separate site providing, from the outset, healthcare services that the people of Berwick town, and its rural and coastal environs, most need to have delivered locally.
2. To ensure a big enough site accommodates a large enough hospital to provide, from the outset, all the local healthcare services needed not just now but for the future; and to allow for expansion to incorporate more services in the longer term as medical technology advances and further financial funds become available.
3. To ensure that proposals for providing all those services (see 1. and 2.) follow, from the outset, the appropriate processes and procedures, and proper planning, to guarantee the new hospital delivers them.

*This must include a rigorous and robust review of the increase in patient referral rates for services lost from Berwick over the years; and an accurate impact assessment, over those years, of the increase in the number of journeys that this has forced people to have to undertake; i.e. the time and associated costs (in all senses, not just financial)\* not only for patients but also for their families, friends and carers who are accompanying them to appointments, or visiting them while they are in hospital.*

\*bus fares, train tickets, metro tickets, taxi charges, parking fees, petrol money, call charges; childcare costs, loss of earnings for time off work, employers' financial losses and difficulties covering absences; stress of coping, particularly at tricky times (journeys very early or late in the day, limited bank holiday services, awkward appointment times); access problems via the main A1 road south (slow progress in bad weather; dangerous driving conditions: dark, wet, ice, snow; impassable at times: snow, accidents; closures and diversions: roadworks, repairs): negative impact on ambulance response times and patient transport transfer times etc. etc. etc.