

6 June 2014

Dear Sir

Your article (['Half billion pound NHS cuts in south west London branded unachievable, 5 June'](#)) appears to have misunderstood a number of points in our draft five-year strategy for south west London.

Firstly, we should clarify that the combined savings targets of the six clinical commissioning groups come to around £210 million over the next five years. These savings do not amount to 'cuts'. We will spend our money differently – for example, by delivering more services outside hospital and getting more for the same amount of money – but we won't be spending less. The article contains some good examples of this type of change in Merton.

Secondly, the £360 million figure that you quote is the aggregate of the initial savings plans put forward by our four local hospital trusts, not the CCGs. Each hospital trust is responsible for its own finances and has its own cost improvement programme to make sure that it can balance its books. This is not something that the hospitals have been asked to do by the CCGs and the figure is included in our strategy for context only.

Thirdly, it is the CCGs, not Monitor or the Foundation Trust Network, who have questioned whether these savings are achievable. We know that they are initial projections and that they may change, but we would not be responsible commissioners if we didn't question whether such ambitious efficiencies could be achieved.

Finally, we want to be clear that in the context of this financial challenge, our ambition as CCGs has always been to improve the quality of services in south west London. A whole system approach, with hospitals, community services, mental health services and GPs working much more closely together and with local authority social care teams, can in our view deliver improved care and ensure we meet our statutory obligations to live within our means.

Yours sincerely

Dr Tony Brzezicki – Chair, Croydon CCG  
Dr Howard Freeman – Chair, Merton CCG  
Dr Brendan Hudson – Chair, Sutton CCG  
Dr Naz Jivani – Chair, Kingston CCG  
Dr Nicola Jones – Chair, Wandsworth CCG  
Dr Graham Lewis – Chair, Richmond CCG