

Chief Executive's Office
The Murray Building
The James Cook University Hospital
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Dear colleague

Temporary changes to breast radiology service at The James Cook University Hospital

We've taken the decision to make a temporary change to the breast radiology service we provide on Teesside from 1 October due to severe staffing problems.

Every week GPs refer around 95 women with concerns about changes in their breasts to a one-stop diagnostic service at both The James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough and the Friarage Hospital in Northallerton, where they have a range of tests in one day. Around 20% of these women will require follow-up treatment for a range of conditions.

The trust's diagnostic service is run by one consultant radiologist, one consultant radiographer, one highly specialist radiographer and five advanced practitioner radiographers but, unfortunately, two members of staff – the consultant radiographer and highly specialist radiographer – decided to take up posts in other organisations earlier this year.

As there is a national shortage of these extremely specialist clinicians, who generally prefer to work alongside breast screening services, we have struggled to recruit to these posts. The organisation did manage to recruit a locum radiologist, who would have allowed the service to continue, but at the eleventh hour the locum decided to take another role closer to their home.

The current staffing situation means it would not be safe to continue to offer this service at The James Cook University Hospital although we will continue to see around 30 patients attending the Friarage Hospital every Friday.

To accommodate the remaining patients from the Middlesbrough, Redcar and East Cleveland area; North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, which runs the local breast screening service, has agreed to provide this service in the short-term. This decision has also been discussed and is supported by our commissioners South Tees Clinical Commissioning Group.

What these temporary changes mean for patients from Middlesbrough, Redcar and East Cleveland, is while they will have to travel to the University Hospital of North Tees in Stockton for their diagnostic tests, they will **still** receive any further follow-up treatment at The James Cook University Hospital if required.

We will, of course, continue to pursue every opportunity to attract these highly specialist clinicians to the trust. We have launched a national and European recruitment campaign to seek replacements and are talking to potential candidates. A consultant radiologist is also about to start training in this specialist field, although it will be 12 months before they are fully qualified to step into the role at the hospital, and a number of advanced practitioners are also undertaking one to two year courses to enhance their skills and ultimately help to safeguard the service.

If you wish to discuss this in further detail or have any queries please get in touch with my personal assistant Margaret Coyle and we'll arrange for the most appropriate person to get back to you, which may be myself or a member of the clinical team.

Yours sincerely



Professor Tricia Hart
Chief executive

Chairman: Deborah Jenkins

Chief Executive: Professor Tricia Hart