Written evidence from Dr Matthew Phillips

I am a consultant in GU Medicine and I am also a Clinical Director.

Whilst mindful of the economic climate, successive cuts in budgets for provision have caused services, such as mine, to not just think what is best for a patient but to begin to ration care. Open access is disappearing, with appointment systems rapidly coming in, in order to control work and cost flows. A 21 year old with genital symptoms should not have to wait to be seen. It is well understood that early resolution is better for that person and better for public health.

The fracturing of HIV commissioning (by NHS England) and GU commissioning (by Las) has also caused disjointed work. I am in a service where the NHS E commissioners declined to work with the LA commissioners. This now results in patients sometimes making a round trip of greater than 100 miles to another city to pick up HIV medications which are available, and prescribable, by experts within the patient’s area of origin. NHS E have been under resourced to understand the implications of centralising HIV care, and have not been required to demonstrate co work with Local Authorities in a meaningful way that is open to enquiry and challenge when clinicians, patients and commissioners are unhappy. Centralisation is good in Cancer care, as people are in hope that that is a temporary, life condition. HIV is lifelong, and NHS England have struggled to architecturalise and enforce networked working with rural experts to ensure that patients away from big cities have as easy a time as those within the cities.

I am proud to work in Sexual Health. We continue the work of some of the great changes of the 21st century- effective contraception to prevent so many pregnancies that women die; rapid care of syphilis preventing rare complications and congenital syphilis; and of course HIV care- where there is a groundswell of support that new infections may be halted in our lifetimes. It is heartbreaking to see this service- all about health and central to many people’s lives- being dismantled.