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Dear stakeholder

I am writing to let you know the most recent development in our joint efforts with the community of Axminster to reinstate inpatient beds at the community hospital.

It is with great disappointment that we will announce later today that due to significant staffing changes over the last 10 days, we have had to take the decision that we cannot reopen the beds at this time.

We know the whole community will share our disappointment, particularly following the extremely successful joint recruitment efforts which enabled us to start planning to reopen the beds.

Having been in a position in June 2015 when over 80% of the Band 5 registered nursing posts for Axminster were being filled by permanent staff, the figure has since dropped to 57.5%.

There are currently 4.27 full-time equivalent vacancies for registered nurses.

With the national nursing shortage placing real pressure on our other community services, we cannot open a service knowing it would be reliant on agency staff and/or have an adverse impact on other services in neighbouring towns.

We have tried our absolute hardest not to be in this position and were initially really successful at bucking the national trend by attracting fantastic candidates to work in our community hospitals. Had any of the staffing changes occurred separately, we could have worked around them.

Our priority is to focus on ensuring the staffing situation is addressed, which ensures that residents of Axminster and Seaton continue to have local access to a community hospital inpatient service.

I am aware there will be a great deal of interest in how the situation has changed over such a short period of time.

We have met representatives of the League of Friends and the Axminster Hospital Action Group to discuss our options and are committed to keeping our wider stakeholders updated as to the next steps.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely



Dr Alison Diamond  
Chief Executive  
Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust

## **BACKGROUND**

The Trust has been working with the League of Friends and the Axminster Hospital Action Group since January 2015 to reinstate the inpatient beds using a £300,000 donation from the League of Friends, following a consultation on safer staffing last year.

**January 2015:** <http://www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk/2015/01/trust-to-work-with-axminster-league-of-friends-over-300000-offer-to-help-recruit-extra-nurses-to-resolve-staffing-and-patient-safety-issues/>

**January 2015:** <http://www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk/2015/01/recruitment-open-days-to-be-held-in-february-at-axminster-and-seaton-community-hospitals/>

**February 2015:** <http://www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk/2015/02/community-involvement-making-the-difference-to-recruiting-nurses-in-axminster/>

**May 2015:** <http://www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk/2015/05/nhs-trust-in-conjunction-with-axminster-league-of-friends-and-action-group-plans-to-reopen-inpatient-beds-at-axminster-community-hospital-in-july-2015/>