

IS ANYONE LISTENING?

NHS Cuts & Referrals to Sec of State

The role of Health Scrutiny Committees and the Independent Reconfiguration Panel

House of Commons Committee Room 9, 10th September 2018

Host: Paula Sherriff MP, Dewsbury

REPORT

Present

Members of Parliament	Campaign Groups:
Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire)	999 Call for the NHS
Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West)	Calderdale & Kirklees 999 Call for the NHS
Mike Hill (Hartlepool)	Defend Dorset NHS
Norman Lamb (North Norfolk)	Fighting 4 Life Lincolnshire
Sandy Martin (Ipswich)	Keep the Horton General
Toby Perkins (Chesterfield)	North Kirklees Support the NHS
Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield)	Save Our Hospitals NW London
Paula Sheriff (Dewsbury)	Save Our Hospital Services Devon
Eleanor Smith (Wolverhampton SW)	Save Rothbury Community Hospital
Anne Marie Trevelyan (Berwick-upon-Tweed)	S.T.I.T.C.H
Liz Twist (Blaydon)	Save The Irreplaceable Torrington Community Hospital
Matt Warman (Boston & Skegness)	

A number of MPs' assistants were also present
but we don't know which MPs they work for.

The attached report contains:

Executive Summary
Record of key points made in the meeting

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are serious, systemic failings on the part of Health Scrutiny Committees across England, and also in the process of referral to the Secretary of State and the Independent Reconfiguration Panel.

As a result, damaging reconfigurations are allowed to go ahead, bringing unacceptable risks to the safety of NHS organisations, staff and patients.

MPs and campaign groups have agreed to work together to tackle these systemic failings. The meeting identified initial actions, below.

We need to set a date for a follow up meeting in a few months, to review progress and identify further action as necessary.

MPs confirmed that even if failings in the Health Scrutiny and referrals process occur outside their own constituency, if these are system failings rather than purely local failings, they are prepared to take them up with the Health Secretary.

MPs & campaigners should make sure that the Health Secretary AND the Shadow Health Secretary are aware of these systemic failings and our intention to resolve them.

Initial actions agreed at the meeting

999 Call for the NHS will coordinate follow up actions by MPs and Campaign groups.

1. MPs will use the next Health Questions on 23rd October to ask the Health Secretary to act promptly on the advice of the Independent Reconfiguration Panel about the 'temporary' removal of consultant-led maternity services at the Horton. And that he consider the need for the Department of Health and NHS England to give clear guidance on health scrutiny regulations and processes when scrutinising Sustainability and Transformation Plans and Integrated Care Systems (rather than just single NHS organisations' proposals for significant service change).
2. MPs will ask the Health and Social Care Select Committee to hold an inquiry into the roles, functions and performance of Health Scrutiny Committees and the Independent Reconfiguration Panel. (Sandy Martin MP volunteered to organise this request.)

3. 999 Call for the NHS will send this document to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel, with a covering letter reinforcing the following points:

- Health scrutiny committees and the Independent Reconfiguration Panel need to broaden their remit to include scrutiny of how substantial reconfiguration proposals are affected by sustained “austerity” public spending cuts, national failures in NHS workforce planning, and the introduction of Sustainability and Transformation Plans/Integrated Care Systems.
- Health Scrutiny Committees should include the evidence and views of the public when making decisions about whether to refer proposals for substantial variations to the Secretary of State. They should make sure this evidence and these views reach the Secretary of State. The Independent Reconfiguration Panel should consider this evidence and views in its advice to the Secretary of State.
- The Independent Reconfiguration Panel should hold full reviews of referred proposals, including visiting the areas concerned and holding public meetings to listen to the views of all members of the public who want to take part. There have been NO full IRP reviews since the implementation of the 2013 Regulations. Why?

Rationale

Although MPs at the meeting said that Health Scrutiny is a “joke” that “*means nothing at all*” - and trying to make it work is like “*biting the leg of a dead sheep*” - the Scrutiny and referrals process is the main statutory mechanism to protect the NHS from damaging cuts and changes. So we feel we have to do everything we can to make it work effectively.

Thanks

Thanks to Paula Sherriff MP and her assistants for hosting the meeting and to all who took part.