

Question to the Health and Well-being Board 19th October 2017

The NHS locally and across England is in the throes of its largest reorganisation since its foundation.

The Health and Social Care Act of 2012 removed the Secretary of States responsibility for the provision of the NHS, and the ability of Parliament to hold him to account for the changes underway, which he maintains are the responsibility of locally appointed doctors.

It is only local government, through Health and Well-being Boards and Scrutiny Committees, that can try to ensure that decisions that affect our health and care services are in the best interest of the communities that elected them.

In July the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee of Calderdale and Kirklees decided to refer the Right Care, Right Time, Right Place proposals to the Secretary of State for Health, as they had not been provided with adequate evidence that the proposals would work in practice.

Since then, Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust has published its Full Business Case, which is largely a discussion of whether the Trust can afford the Private Finance Initiatives that would be required.

There is very little detail of how Calderdale Royal would be modified to be able to accept the huge increase in patient numbers that will arise from the demolition of most of Huddersfield Royal. But those Calderdale Councillors and residents that expect to see a major investment in the facilities at the old Work-House should take on board that page 88 of the Full Business Case states "The Plan assumes minimal change of existing buildings at CRH and an appropriate level of derogation to ensure compliance with the necessary statutory requirements." As far as I am aware, derogation means an exemption or relaxation from a rule of law: am I the only person to find this an alarming statement.

In the last fortnight, the Governing Bodies of both CCGs have voted their support for the Full Business Case. The planning process is rolling on, but the Joint Scrutiny Committee has no published plans to continue the valuable work that it has done so far. Does the Health and Well-being Board have any influence over their programme of work?

Important aspects of the NHS in Calderdale have been taken over by the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Sustainability and Transformation Partnership and are, as a result, even less transparent than before. This includes such vital concerns as work-force planning (which has been scandalously neglected over the past seven years and is the most serious threat to the continuation of the NHS), the centralisation of acute stroke services (for which the supporting evidence is nowhere near as strong as the zealots would have you believe: the results of the reconfiguration in Greater Manchester are underwhelming), and decisions on which treatments to restrict or ration.

Despite this, the West Yorkshire Joint Health Scrutiny Committee has not met since March.

Does the Health and Well-being Board find this acceptable, and if not, what is it going to do to at least make some show of democratic accountability?

Colin Hutchinson