



Department of Health

Your Ref: AL/TG/1702

PO-1075832

The Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP
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From the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health

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21 MAR 2017

De Andrea,

Thank you for your letter of 20 February about Horton General Hospital.

As you mention, Oxfordshire Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided at its meeting of 2 February to refer the decision to temporarily suspend obstetric services at the Horton General Hospital to me. Departmental officials are currently considering the referral, and I hope you will appreciate that I cannot comment further at this point.

You also refer to Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG's) public consultation, which was launched on 16 January and includes the proposal to make permanent the temporary changes to obstetrics at the Horton. I note from your letter to Cherwell District Council that you have a number of concerns about the consultation proposals and public engagement.

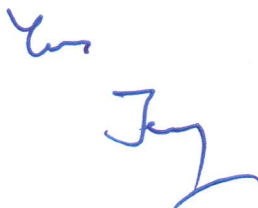
The reconfiguration of frontline services and the conduct of public consultations is a matter for the local NHS. We are clear that any major changes should meet the Government's four tests for service change: they should have support from GP commissioners, be based on clinical evidence, demonstrate public and patient engagement, and consider patient choice.

I note your concerns about the schedule and location of the planned public meetings and engagement activities, and would encourage you to continue to raise these concerns locally so that the CCG can ensure that your constituents get a proper opportunity to provide feedback before the consultation concludes on 9 April.

Although we play no direct role in this local process, I was concerned to read that you had not, at the time of writing, received responses to letters you sent to the Chair of Oxfordshire CCG. In view of your concerns, my officials contacted NHS England and the CCG for further information.

The CCG has advised that, since the launch of the public consultation, correspondence has significantly increased, including a number of letters from MPs. The CCG also advises that it has responded to a number of letters from you, but that two dated 31 January (your ref: AL/TG/1701) had not yet received a response. I understand, however, that responses were drafted and should have been sent by the end of the week commencing 27 February. If you still have not received these responses, I would encourage you to contact the CCG again.

I hope this reply is helpful.



JEREMY HUNT