



Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP)

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2024 in London

Members present:

Sir Norman Williams, Chair
Simon Brake
Tansi Harper
Graham Jagger
Rajesh Khanna
Luke March
Tony Schapira
Rohan Sivanandan
Elaine Strachan-Hall
Miles Wagstaff
Suzy Walton (via telephone for item 4 onwards)

In attendance:

Richard Jeavons, IRP Chief Executive
IRP secretariat
Grayling Communications representative

Apologies:

None

1. Welcome, declarations of interest and minutes of the previous meeting

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members and opened the meeting. No new interests were declared and the minutes from the meeting held on 14 November 2023 were formally approved.

2. Chair's update

- 2.1 The Chair updated members on progress with public appointments. Recommendations for the appointment of six new members, and the reappointment of five current members to serve second terms, are with ministers in the Department of Health and Social Care for decision.

3. Integration and system working with guest speakers from the Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care System

- 3.1 Members received a presentation from Justine Richards, Chief Strategy Officer, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, and Peter Fahy, Director of Adult Services and Housing, Coventry City Council.
- 3.2 Key points from the presentation and the panel's discussion included:
- The Improving Lives Programme is a partnership between the local authority, the integrated care board and the NHS trust in Coventry to transform services for older people to lead independent lives in good health.
 - The programme requires a cultural shift for staff to 'pull' patients from the hospital to the community and focus on their reablement, supported by digital initiatives such as a joined-up integrated care record.
 - A vertically integrated model for care from the hospital to the community is in development, with benefits for integration both within health and across health and care systems, building on virtual wards and the 'hospital at home' approach.

- Commissioning responsibilities will be delegated down to place level using a lead provider model. It was recognised that this can be challenging with financial savings targets to meet to address growth in demand and inflation and will require joint governance arrangements with the local authority.
- The need to empower staff and improve morale was recognised, particularly among care staff, by investing in training and developing more fulfilling roles.

3.3 The Chair thanked the speakers for an interesting and engaging discussion.

4. Health and Care Act 2022 implementation: update on ministerial intervention powers over the reconfiguration of NHS services

4.1 Members received a presentation from Jason Yiannikou, Director of System Oversight and Integration, Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), on the new powers for ministers, along with copies of the statutory guidance for the NHS and the updated health scrutiny guidance for local authorities published by DHSC.

4.2 Key points from the presentation and the panel's discussion included:

- The power for the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to call in NHS reconfiguration proposals will come into force on 31 January 2024 and ministers will have discretion in how they choose to enact this power. Instead of a referral from a local authority health overview and scrutiny committee, anyone will be able to ask the Secretary of State to intervene and call in a proposal.
- DHSC's view is that most reconfigurations are able to be managed effectively at a local level and there will be a high threshold for ministerial intervention. This principle is set out in the statutory guidance which will be reviewed in around a year's time as the new legislation is embedded.
- Each call in request will be considered on its merits and DHSC will continue to work together with the IRP to respond to requests for independent advice from ministers building on established practice.

4.3 It was agreed that the IRP secretariat would liaise with DHSC to understand the type of call in requests being received by ministers and an update shared at the next IRP meeting.

5. NHS reconfigurations watch list

5.1 Members received a report summarising current NHS reconfiguration proposals across England, including major acute service changes and those involving primary and community care.

5.2 It was noted that:

- The leader of Merton Council had written to the Secretary of State with concerns about the reconfiguration of St Helier Hospital.



- Devon County Council’s health scrutiny committee had held a vote on a motion to send a new referral to the Secretary of State to object to NHS Devon Integrated Care Board’s proposal to close Teignmouth Community Hospital. The vote was lost, however other organisations will have the power to make a call in request under the new legislation from 31 January 2024.
- Caroline Ansell MP was planning to make a call in request about changes to the paediatric department at Eastbourne District General Hospital in East Sussex.

6. IRP advice to Minister Lord Markham regarding the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals Transformation Programme

- 6.1 Members received and noted the IRP’s report for Lord Markham on the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals Transformation Programme, which was sent on 4 December 2023 and later published on GOV.UK. The advice of the panel was commissioned by Lord Markham in response to concerns raised by Telford & Wrekin Council.
- 6.2 The Minister of State for Health, Andrew Stephenson MP, wrote to the Chair on 21 December 2023 to accept all 13 of the IRP’s recommendations contained in the report. The Chair thanked members and the secretariat for their work on the case.
- 6.3 IRP members reflected on the lessons learned and a representative from the panel’s public relations agency, Grayling Communications, updated members on the media response.

7. Any other business

- 7.1 None.
- 7.2 The Chair thanked all those present and closed the meeting.