



Independent Reconfiguration Panel
IRPinfo@dhsc.gov.uk

Sent via email to:
The Rt Hon Andrew Stephenson CBE MP
Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care

23 April 2024

Dear Minister,

I am writing as Chair of the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) as I await confirmation of a date for our upcoming meeting in which we will review the recent work of the IRP and discuss our priorities for the year ahead in 2024-25.

You will be aware of the IRP's recent advice on the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals Transformation Programme commissioned by Lord Markham and published in December 2023. We provided 13 recommendations to improve the process and address the concerns raised by one of the local authorities in the integrated care system and I was pleased to receive your reply to confirm that you had accepted all of our recommendations in full and that this significant capital scheme will now continue.

The IRP is aware that a number of MPs and other stakeholders have recently raised concerns with you about changes to NHS services in their local areas, including amongst others the location of the principal treatment centre for children's cancer in south London, the potential closure of the hyper-acute stroke unit at Yeovil District Hospital in Somerset and the public consultation regarding the future of St Peter's Hospital in Essex.

I would like to reiterate that the IRP's core purpose is to provide advice to you and the Secretary of State on any matters related to NHS reconfigurations including the use of the new call in power recently introduced in legislation. For over 20 years the IRP has supported ministers with their decision making on these issues by independently examining NHS proposals to provide robust assurance and suggest the best way forward to help resolve local disputes. Our members are made up of a mix of senior NHS clinicians and executive leaders as well as lay members representing the public and patient perspectives with specialist skills, knowledge and experience in this area.

I am grateful for your support with the public appointments process this past year in which we welcomed four new members to the IRP appointed by ministers. The IRP has an ongoing vacancy for a clinical member which I hope will be resolved as soon as possible.

I look forward to hearing from your office to confirm the arrangements for our meeting.

Kind regards,

Professor Sir Norman Williams
Chair of the Independent Reconfiguration Panel