

Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP)

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2025 in London

Members present:

Sir Norman Williams, Chair
Simon Brake
Mark Cheetham
Tansi Harper
Rajesh Khanna
Angela McNab
Tony Schapira
David Stout
Miles Wagstaff
Suzy Walton
Andrea Young

In attendance:

Richard Jeavons, IRP Chief Executive
IRP Secretariat

Apologies received:

Graham Jagger
Ann Lloyd
Luke March
Rohan Sivanandan
Elaine Strachan-Hall

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

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and member Tony Schapira declared a new interest as a non-executive director for the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust from 1 July 2025. The IRP's register of interests was updated.
- 1.2 The minutes from the IRP meeting held on 11 March 2025 were formally approved.

2. NHS Confederation guest speakers

- 2.1 The Chair welcomed Edward Jones and Skeena Williamson from the NHS Confederation who presented an update on their policy work around strategic commissioning, including a recently published report entitled 'Pioneers of reform'.
- 2.2 Members discussed the need to balance financial savings with patient need, safety and choice, and considered how the scrutiny and oversight functions for NHS service reconfigurations might evolve as NHS England merges with the Department of Health and Social Care, including the future of the regional NHS clinical senates.
- 2.3 It was stated that the NHS Confederation received positive feedback from its members about the role of the IRP in helping to resolve conflict around service change proposals.

3. Chair's update

- 3.1 The Chair updated members on the ongoing public appointments process for new IRP members. It was understood that ministers had approved the interview panel's recommendations following interviews held in April and that the candidates would now progress through the necessary clearance checks before appointment.

3.2 Members received and noted the IRP's annual business review for 2024-25 that had been published on GOV.UK in April.

3.3 The Chair updated members on the government's ongoing review of arm's length bodies and the spending review. The IRP sponsorship team in the Department of Health and Social Care had recommended to ministers to retain the IRP in its current form as an advisory non-departmental public body.

4. Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) policy update

4.1 Jason Yiannikou, senior sponsor for the IRP in DHSC, joined the meeting for this item, supported by a DHSC policy official in the NHS reconfigurations team, to present an update for members.

4.2 It was acknowledged that there had not been as much casework coming through to the IRP as had been anticipated, although the Secretary of State had recently decided to commission the IRP for preliminary advice about the Humber acute services programme, following the receipt of two call in requests from Lincolnshire County Council and North Lincolnshire Council. The commissioning letter was expected to be sent from the Minister of State to the IRP Chair soon.

4.3 Member Dr Raj Khanna declared an interest in the Humber case having previously reviewed the reconfiguration proposal as an independent clinical review panel member for the NHS Yorkshire and the Humber Clinical Senate and it was therefore agreed that he would recuse himself from any work on the case to avoid a conflict. The IRP's register of interests was updated.

4.4 The Chair expressed concern about the length of time that the Humber case had been waiting for a decision and that the IRP had not been engaged for advice earlier in the process. The Chair planned to raise this with the Minister of the State at their introductory meeting planned for June and to reiterate that the IRP's role is to help ministers to make timely and evidence-based decisions.

4.5 Members also received an update on the progress of the 10 Year Health Plan, as well as the government's arm's length body review, the transformation programme to merge NHS England with DHSC and the appointment of the new DHSC permanent secretary.

4.6 The Chair thanked all those present and closed the meeting.