

Mr Steven Childs
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Dear Mr Childs,

19 December 2016

The Future of Health Care in West, North and East Cumbria

I am disturbed to see the proposals set out in the public consultation document: *The Future of Health Care in West, North and East Cumbria*, on the basis that they yet again diminish rather than enhance health care provision for people living in West Cumbria.

As a Veterinary Surgeon and a long serving Community First Responder I am concerned to hear and read about the proposed reduction or removal of maternity services, children's services, emergency and acute care, hyper-acute stroke services and emergency and trauma services from West Cumbria, increasing inequality of services and inequality of access to services to the local populace.

As a vet who spent 6 years working full time serving the communities from Wasdale in the north to Walney Island in the south of the county, I well understand the importance of getting to "maternity" cases quickly and to those patients who are acutely ill. Our road network is poor and frequently affected by traffic issues due to weather, accidents or simply slow or heavy traffic with few chances to overtake safely. As I well know, speedy attendance to cases can literally mean the difference between life or death. In fact I suggest that if your proposals are implemented the farm animals of this borough of Copeland will have faster access to expert "maternity" services than the local people. I'm not sure what the RSPCA's opinion would be towards anyone who transported their cow, heifer or ewe with dystocia a one and a half hour journey from where I live to a specialist maternity unit in Carlisle.

Twenty five years ago my son was almost born in roadworks a mile short of West Cumbria Hospital; luckily we just got there in time and enjoyed a quick birth within a few minutes of arrival. His birth was entirely normal requiring minimal assistance and I accept there would probably have been no issue if he had been born on the roadside. However, if his birth had been problematic for whatever reason I would have never forgiven myself or the health authorities if I had had to drive another hour to a fully operational maternity unit.

With an ageing population and yet further reduction in public transport options for my local Parishioners I am also concerned to see the proposals to consolidate community bed provisions into fewer sites. The end of life process should be just as important to us as the start of life and it is preferable that older members of our community feel cherished and loved by those who know them best as they near their end. This is so much harder to achieve if their friends and family have to travel significant distances to see them once they need more specialist care than can be provided for them in their own homes.

I am disappointed, and remain to be convinced that the recent proposals are innovative and workable solutions to improve health care provision for the local communities both rural and urban, of Copeland.

As a veterinary surgeon, Community First Responder, Parish Councillor, local businessman and Church Warden I politely ask you to seriously reconsider these proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Peter Frost-Pennington B.V.M.S. M.R.C.V.S
Muncaster Parish Council