

Patient & Public Involvement Forums

National Association of Patients Forums

Lord Darzi, KBE, FMedSci, FREng (Hon)
Under Secretary of State for Health
Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS

July 26th 2007

Dear Lord Darzi,

Patient and Public Involvement in Health and Social Care

May we congratulate you on your appointment as Under Secretary of State for Health.

The National Association of Patient's Forums is an elected body made up of representatives from all English regions. We are mindful of the brief to 'Review the NHS' given to you by the Secretary of State for Health and we are writing to ask you to ensure that patients will be at the heart of this review - not through health professionals, but in their own right.

I am sure you will agree that the NHS is first and foremost a service to provide health and care; not a business and it is the patients and the public that Ministers, NHS planners and professional staff must listen to and serve. We have all seen numerous reforms and reconfigurations led by central Government or the SHAs, which in effect bombard the service and cause a collapse in morale and a decline in service standards. This has become the norm in the NHS.

Now we face another significant reform; the proposed abolition of Patient' Forums and the introduction of the LINKs. A model being imposed by the Department of Health, which most people with knowledge and experience in the field see as destructive to patients and public involvement and which will lead to a major loss of powers for patients and the public. The DH proposals are being driven through parliament against the advice of the Select

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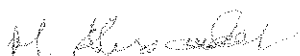
Committee for Health, Patients' Forums, voluntary sector organisations and experts in the House of Lords.

We believe that if your review of the NHS is going to be a significant, "once in a lifetime" study, it would be both sensible and constructive to put the Department's vague, insubstantial and highly damaging plans to establish LINKs on-hold until the future configuration of the NHS is known.

Patient's Forums have a wealth of experience of local and regional services, a detailed knowledge of NHS Trusts and PCTs and have close links with communities and patients. They have statutory powers that enable them to carry out their role of helping to raise standards and argue for better services from the patient's point of view. They are effective critical friends of the NHS.

Staff in the NHS have professional bodies to speak for them. It is in our view, inconceivable that your Review of the NHS should go ahead without establishing direct and ongoing dialogue with Patients' Forums through their National Association. We would therefore be grateful for an opportunity to meet with you to discuss patient and public involvement within the context of your Review and in the longer term

Yours sincerely



Malcolm Alexander
Chair
National Association of Patients' Forums