

Tom Brake MP

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dr Michelle Drage – Chief Executive
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My Ref: ZA78134/MR
14 September 2016

Dear Michelle

Thank you for your letter of 12 September about the NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plans.

I share your concerns about how Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) are being implemented; there is no doubt that our NHS is at breaking point and is in desperate need of more funding. Our conversation on Monday confirmed this.

Everybody agrees that current models of care are fragmented and reactive, instead of joined-up and preventative. The system is geared around emergency care rather than trying to stop people getting ill in the first place. The NHS needs to be able to intervene early when necessary and ensure that joined-up care fits the needs of individuals.

This is what Sustainability and Transformation Plans were originally intended to help do and why I was previously broadly supportive. These plans were designed to break down barriers to the integration of health services, ensure that services are organised sustainably and ultimately improve the quality of care for local people. The plans formed part of NHS England's 'Five Year Forward View', published in 2014, and were supported by all three main political parties at the time.

However, it's now clear that there has been a worrying failure to engage local service users as part of the plan's design process – even though one of the central aims of the Five Year Forward View was to give patients greater control over their own care. This is why Liberal Democrat Health spokesperson Norman Lamb is calling for better transparency and scrutiny of the development of these plans. We believe it is vital that service users, patients, carers, clinicians and others have a say in the changes that are being proposed in their

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local area. There clearly hasn't been enough effort to engage the public so far.

It would be scandalous if the Government hoped to use these plans as an excuse to cut services and starve the NHS of the funding it desperately needs, by allowing decisions to be made behind closed doors and with no real accountability to the local people affected. Liberal Democrats are also keen to see mental health services put at the heart of each STP. This area of healthcare has been ignored for far too long, and we want to make sure this changes.

Ultimately, there's a greater problem than STPs – it is the Government's doctrine that £8 billion funding for the NHS by 2020 will be enough. This is simply not the case. After the cuts to spending on public health, education and training are taken into account, funding for the NHS is more like £4.5 billion.

The system is at breaking point and urgently needs a new long-term funding settlement to ensure sustainable, high-quality care for all. Liberal Democrats will not let the Government get away with using these plans as an excuse to cut services and starve the NHS of the funding it needs. Please be assured that we will continue to challenge the Government both inside and outside Parliament.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance or if you need me to do anything specific after our meeting, do let me know.

Yours sincerely


Tom Brake MP
Liberal Democrat, Carshalton and Wallington
Spokesman for Foreign Affairs and Chief Whip

Whilst Tom Brake MP will treat as confidential any personal information that you pass to him, he will normally allow staff and authorised volunteers to see it if this is needed to help and advise you. He may pass on all or some of the information to agencies such as the Jobcentre Plus, HM Revenue and Customs or the Local Council if this is necessary to help with your case. Tom Brake may wish to write to you from time to time to keep you informed on issues that you may find of interest. Please let him know if you do not wish to be contacted for this purpose.

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