

Geoffrey Cox Q.C., M.P. for Torridge & West Devon



GC//ch

9 October 2015

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Cllr Cathrine Simmons, Mayor
Great Torrington Town Council
Castle Hill
Great Torrington
Devon
EX38 8AA

Dear Cllr Simmons

Closure of Community Hospitals

Thank you for your email, dated 9 October 2015, and for enclosing your letter to The Rt Hon David Cameron MP regarding your ongoing concerns about the closure of community hospital beds in North Devon and Torridge. As I am sure you are aware, I have consistently expressed my dissatisfaction with the recent consultation process, and the apparent failure to adequately engage with both the Trust's own healthcare professionals and the local community.

Moreover, throughout the consultation process I have held meetings with the NHS Trust and the CCG, as well as raising concerns in Westminster with the Minister responsible for hospitals - Ben Gummer MP. I have also attended various public meetings, at which I made clear my view that the removal of any community beds, without being completely certain that the alternative service is comparable or greater, would be ill advised.

While I am pleased that Holsworthy has retained its community beds, I am not convinced that any beds should be closed until the Care Closer to Home scheme has been proven irrefutably effective. Regrettably, it seems that despite the concerns that have been raised with them; the Trust have decided to go ahead with their plans to reduce bed numbers immediately. I will therefore continue to urge the Trust to ensure that these changes are put in place safely and effectively, and that sufficient investment is made available to implement Care Closer to Home as soon as possible.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that I recognise, and sympathise with, your concerns about the distribution of healthcare resources between urban and rural communities. Indeed, as you rightly note in your letter to the Prime Minister, one of the most troubling aspects of the way in which Care Closer to Home has been implemented in Devon, is the lack of attention paid to the unique challenges of rural life.

Roads in dire need of maintenance, inconsistent mobile phone reception, often inadequate public transport, and the greater travel times imposed by rural geography; all of these factors make it much hard to provide safe and effective healthcare in rural communities.

**Please reply to the Constituency Office
2 Bridge Chambers, Lower Bridge Street, Bideford, Devon, EX39 2BU.
Tel: 01237 459001 Fax: 01237 459003**

Website: geoffreycox.co.uk
Email: tellgeoffrey@geoffreycox.co.uk


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I have therefore made representations on behalf of my constituents to the Secretary of State for Health, The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt, MP. I have asked him to clarify the way in which healthcare resources are currently allocated to isolated rural communities like Torrridge, and raised with him some of the unique challenges faced by public services in Devon. I have further requested that he consider any steps his Department can take to re-evaluate how funding is allocated for these communities.

I will of course continue to monitor the situation closely.

Yours sincerely,


CHRIS HAZELL

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Geoffrey Cox Q.C., M.P.
(dictated by Geoffrey Cox but signed in his absence)

I will treat as confidential all personal information you give to me or to my staff. I may need to pass on this information to others so that they can help you. I undertake to handle the information you give me in line with requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

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