



# ***A Manifesto for our Health Service***

## **This is addressed to our local communities:**

**to politicians of course, but more importantly to individuals, and to all the community groups, faith groups, voluntary organisations and trade unions who contribute so much to our society.** The NHS in Shropshire and in Telford and Wrekin faces chaos. One of our two A&Es and one of our two acute hospitals is set to close. We face longer journeys for care, there will be fewer hospital beds, and patients will be discharged from hospital far sooner than now. Alternative provision in the community is not being put in place at anything close to the level that would be required. This isn't about patient care – this is crisis management, driven by cuts.

Across Shropshire, Powys and Telford and Wrekin, we have a population of 540,000 people in an area of over 2000 square miles who depend on local hospital services and other healthcare. A single acute hospital and a single A&E would be grotesquely inadequate provision for a population and an area this size. The rurality of most of the area, and all the problems around access that go with this, cannot be ignored. The future is intended to be one of savage NHS cuts – with NHS England claiming that Shropshire's NHS has too much money, and the government planning a £30 billion shortfall in funding for the English NHS.

**Are you willing to make a stand for our NHS? Can you or your organisation support this manifesto?**

**We also have a general election coming up. You may wish to look carefully at the views of all your Parliamentary candidates on NHS cuts and privatisation. Ask them, too, if they will stand up to NHS planners and call for our local A&E and acute hospital to stay open. Please use your vote to support our NHS.**

## **What We Need Locally**

***No cuts to our A&Es or our hospitals.*** Our two A&Es – in Shrewsbury and in Telford – must be safeguarded. Both our District General Hospitals must continue to offer a full range of services: emergency and urgent care, acute care for seriously ill people, planned care for more routine treatment. Of course there's an argument for truly specialist care to be centralised – but that's different to closing a whole acute hospital! We also need future review of the centralised Women's and Children's provision at Telford, looking at journey times, access, and the clinical consequences of reduced services at Shrewsbury.

***A better ambulance service.*** We need enough investment in ambulance services that national targets for response times can be met. Currently, Shropshire people are dying unnecessarily, with catastrophic waits even for urgent 999 calls.

***Community NHS care that works.*** Investment in community services – NHS services and social care – is vital. Without resources and planning, 'care closer to home' means patients left without adequate support. A shift of care away from hospital to community settings must be evidence based, properly funded, and in place before any hospital-based service is ended.

***Joined up care – with the funding to make it work.*** Integration between NHS and social care is of course a good idea – but is meaningless if it's about joining up two bankrupt services. Plans to discharge patients earlier from hospital cannot work without investment in social care as well as community NHS provision.

**A commitment to Urgent Care in our rural areas, and to a guaranteed future for our Community Hospitals.** NHS planners wanted to set up only two Urgent Care Centres (at Telford and Shrewsbury), using this as an excuse to close all Minor Injuries Units and undermine our community hospitals. They say they might have changed their minds – but there's still no timescale and no allocated budget for Urgent Care in market towns. We also need an end to the pretence that Urgent Care Centres will be mini A&Es. No; they will be run by nurses with GP support. They will be far removed from our existing A&Es, led by skilled Emergency Consultants.

**An end to division.** NHS bosses have already said they want only one A&E and only one acute hospital – a decision taken with no public consultation at all. They seem to hope that this will set up a 'Shrewsbury versus Telford' conflict, leading to bitter divisions between people in each area. No – we need resources and planning for our whole population, not games playing that seeks to divide us. We need politicians who are brave enough to look at this bigger picture.

**Real engagement and consultation.** Decisions are being taken by a handful of senior NHS managers. Public events have been about ticking boxes, not consulting us. The overwhelming priority behind the 'Future Fit' cuts and closure plans is to slash our hospital services, because the hospital trust is now close to bankruptcy. Everything else is window dressing. There has been little GP involvement, and effectively no involvement at all of community nurses or therapists, or other frontline staff. This isn't good enough.

## **What We Need Nationally**

**The repeal of Health and Social Care Act 2012.** The Act created chaos, and wasted billions. It is a charter for privatisation, and it creates a postcode lottery when it comes to care. It has to go.

**A publicly owned and accountable NHS.** That means an end to privatisation (including PFI, and the TTIP legislation that could hand over our NHS to multinational corporations). Patient need has to come before profit.

**Funding for an NHS that works.** The present government has consciously planned a £30 billion shortfall in NHS funding by 2020. That means service cuts and the loss of services we have taken for granted. We need a commitment to no funding shortfall, and to funding for comprehensive and universal care.

**Urgent steps to train and recruit GPs, nurses, therapists and clinical scientists.** The GP service is heading for crisis – at the very time when GPs will be left to cope with the chaos caused by hospital cuts. Cuts in nurse training places have left an expensive dependence on agency nurses, and shortages of hospital nurses, district nurses and health visitors. The same problems affect other specialist staff. We can't expect a high quality NHS without treating health workers with respect. That means fair pay instead of year-on-year pay cuts, and an end to the culture of bullying that now prevails across the NHS.

**We have a choice: an NHS that's being run down, or an NHS that can provide decent care for us, our children, and their children in their turn. Let's choose a future for our NHS.**

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