



## **\*\*SPECIAL CHELTENHAM GENERAL HOSPITAL UPDATE\*\***

Please sign the petition below concerning the future of Cheltenham General Hospital A&E! Thousands have already signed via Facebook and the additional support of Fortnightly Update readers could be absolutely vital. We have made strong progress in the last 48 hours, but there is more work to do!

### **Trust Bosses' Plans**

At the end of last week I discovered that local Hospital Trust managers in Gloucestershire had drawn up plans to downgrade the A&E at Cheltenham General Hospital. They had formulated a plan (without telling me or other affected MPs) to put their proposals out for a four week 'engagement', slap bang in the middle of August whilst Parliament wasn't sitting and many were on holiday.

I was absolutely furious when I heard this news, which flies in the face of specific assurances the managers have made to me, as well as the substance of the plans which are contrary to government policy. The very day I was tipped off about the plans I spoke to the Secretary of State, Matt Hancock, who was himself very surprised by what the Trust was planning to announce.

Rumours have circulated about the future of Cheltenham's A&E since 2013, before I was elected, when night-time services were shifted to Gloucestershire Royal (GRH). That downgrade in turn followed on the heels of the loss of Battledown Children's Services and doctor-led maternity services.

I have stated consistently in Parliament and in the press that a further Cheltenham A&E would be completely unacceptable, not just for people in Cheltenham, but for those living right across the north and east of our county. GRH also simply doesn't have capacity as anyone who has been there on a Friday or Saturday night will tell you. Time and again, NHS managers told me this wasn't their plan – even that this was “scaremongering”. I am dismayed that those assurances were hollow.

I am particularly angry because I supported our local NHS in their campaign for more funding – helping to secure a settlement that will see cash to the NHS go up from £122bn a year to £149bn a year by 2023. Here in Gloucestershire the Trust has been awarded a

capital grant of £39m plus an additional £10m which I personally helped to extract from the Department of Health (and has helped to fund a state-of-the-art new operating theatre), as well as two new cancer radiotherapy (LINAC) machines.

### **Back-pedalling**

Since I took to social and mainstream media, the Trust has started to row back from the proposal, agreeing to “temporarily pause the next stage of the engagement process due to commence on Monday 5th August.”

I warmly welcome this decision. But the Trust now needs to go further and **rule out** downgrading Cheltenham’s A&E.

### **Sign the Petition!**

I am so grateful to the thousands of people who have already contacted me and signed my petition, launched on Facebook, to state their support for keeping our A&E.

**Do add your name by signing the petition [HERE](#). Numbers matter, so pass this on to friends and family and encourage them to back the campaign too!**

Best wishes,



**Alex Chalk MP**



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