



PRESS RELEASE

Today's announcement by Dr David Richards, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), that "up to 20% of England's 147 consultant-led units need to close due to a shortage of doctors" is potentially of concern to the Horton General Hospital (HGH).

Acknowledging that his controversial proposal would create "a public and political furore", Dr Richards said there should be a "big expansion in the number of midwife-led units".

Following an exhaustive enquiry 2006-8, the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) issued six rulings to ensure that full services were maintained at the HGH. Point 2 stipulated that 'The IRP does not support the Oxford Radcliffe Hospital's proposals to reconfigure services in paediatrics, obstetrics, gynaecology and the special care baby unit (SCBU) at Horton Hospital. The IRP does not consider that they will provide an accessible or improved service to the people of north Oxfordshire and surrounding areas'.

A recent statement by Andrew Stevens, Director of Planning and Information for the Oxford University Hospitals Foundation Trust (OUHFT), confirmed *'that the recent permanent appointment of two obstetrician consultants demonstrated an OUHFT commitment to continue the obstetrics service and the same commitment applies to the paediatrics service'*.

Keep the Horton General Chairman, Keith Strangwood welcomed the statement, remarking "in principle absolutely nothing has changed since the IRP report. However the population is rapidly expanding, house building is booming and there is more traffic to clog up the route from Banbury to the Oxford hospitals. It is vital that our services are maintained for the people of Banburyshire to access with relative ease. Apart from anything else there is a widely acknowledged, acute, shortage of Midwives. How does Dr Richards intend to staff these midwife led units?"

ends

22 January 2016

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