

# **Healthcare in Lincolnshire**

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**The greatest challenge  
facing the new MP  
for Sleaford  
and North Hykeham**

**By Ross Pepper  
Liberal Democrat**

## **THE CONTEXT HERE IN LINCOLNSHIRE**

One of the biggest political issues in this campaign has been the health service. A lot have shouted about the NHS and the crisis that Lincolnshire faces, but little substance appears to come out of this noise. So let me try and spell it out as I see it and understand it.

First and foremost the issues is approaching crisis point and the elements are so different and complex that it is time for a new compact to be formed between the residents here and the Government. The failings have become so total that lives are at best at risk and at worse people are being failed.

Too often the A15 is closed due to an accident, reports of ambulance failures dog the news, the Air Ambulance is a charity, GP surgeries closing and now we have units at hospital closing. This follows the closure of local cottage hospitals in Sleaford and the downgrading of Newark and the closure of Grantham A&E overnight.

I believe that it is time for a change.

### **The issues and elements**

There are many different elements that are all equally crucial to the range of services we need. What I have sought to do is address the issues thoughtfully and coherently, recognising problems and addressing the real constraints that face the NHS.

#### **1. GEOGRAPHY**

This is a vast geographic area and no one hospital can provide for the whole constituency. For one village or another either Lincoln, Grantham and Boston hospitals are too far away. Peterborough and Nottingham are even further to go, but are larger and have specialist services. In some cases, going to a specialist unit in London is a better option.

#### **2. HOSPITAL CLOSURES**

The final closure of local cottage hospitals in Sleaford in 2015 and the downgrading of Spalding and Newark has laid the seed of doubt and mistrust in our NHS and its ability to service local people successfully and equally. Now it is only a matter of time for Grantham to be closed. This needs to be halted and revisited.

#### **3. GP SURGERY CLOSURE**

GP surgeries have taken on more and more responsibilities and indeed the nature of General Practice and front line GP nursing have changed radically, but the perception is that Doctors are massively over-subscribed and have long waiting lists. For many people this is true and the closure of 4 GP surgeries in Lincolnshire makes matters worse. By example, the closure of Metherringham surgery will affect 9,000 people!

#### **4. TRAVEL TIME TRAFFIC CRISIS**

The sheer travel time to get to and from hospital in Lincolnshire has more to do with the poor transport links across the county and years of under-investment by the Conservative County Council has made this situation worse. Virtually all of us have seen the A15 and other roads closed due to an accident and the ability of the emergency services is dangerously hampered.

5. **A FAILING AMBULANCE SERVICE**

This poor transport situation is amplified by the astonishingly poor and indeed dangerous life threatening response times of East Midlands Ambulance Service. This has to improve urgently or be forced into a public inquiry with direct intervention to improve matters before more lives are put at risk.

6. **RECRUITMENT & RETENTION**

Finally, we turn to recruitment and training. The NHS has been kept afloat and indeed turned into the success it is due to the seriously superb injection of international doctors, nurses and support staff. I am grateful to them all. We need to value, reward and retain all of these staff and not pillory them for their heritage or country of birth; but in addition, I would introduce direct training and support with the University of Lincoln being given medical training status to enable the further training, recruitment and retention of staff.

So there is some analysis - if elected as your MP I would look to host a range of local specialist conferences to discuss and debate issues and look to find ways forwards.

Quite often the issues facing health are not just money or resources, but how that money is spent. Too few people openly acknowledge that many of our problems are caused by poor roads, low recruitment and retention and by the lack of training and development. When we work together to solve these challenges, we will start to reverse perception and improve services.

Many of the health issue facing the local area have national issues – clearly the recent strike by Junior Doctors was caused the intransigence of the Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt.

Clearly one of the issues is the reality of training, recruitment and retention. In the 2015 General Election I was the first candidate to call for the establishment of a training hospital in Lincolnshire, probably attached to Lincoln University. This would not be a solution to everything but would go a long way to addressing the brain drain our health service has seen.

I hope that this is helpful, please do let me know what you think.

With all best wishes,

**Ross Pepper**  
**Liberal Democrat**  
**Sleaford and North Hykeham**

# Lincolnshire's NHS crisis

## OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF LINCOLNSHIRE

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Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016

It has just emerged that the NHS has suspended the Neurology units in Lincolnshire at Lincoln, Grantham and Boston Pilgrim Hospitals due to staffing issues.

This follows the closure of Grantham Hospital Accident and Emergency Unit after 6.30pm every evening. Further, since April, ambulances have had to wait outside Lincoln Hospital for between 2 and 4 hours on over 400 occasions!

**We make an impassioned and unprecedented plea. You, local residents, do not have to put up with the Government underfunding and undermining your NHS services.**

The Conservative Party has taken you for granted for too long. This level of service is worrying, dangerous and putting lives at risk.

You deserve better and the Government needs to stop and listen to you.

On Thursday you can vote for a new MP for Sleaford and North Hykeham. This is your chance to be heard. We urge you to support Ross Pepper this Thursday.

Yours sincerely

**Tim Farron, Leader of the Liberal Democrats  
and former Liberal Democrat Party Leaders; Nick Clegg, Ming  
Campbell, Paddy Ashdown and David Steel**