



The Rt Hon Matt Hancock, MP
Secretary for State for Health & Social Care
House of Commons
London
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By email only: matt.hancock.mp@parliament.uk

17 April 2020

Dear Mr Hancock

I am writing to you in relation to a matter of serious public interest and concern.

The coronavirus pandemic has utterly exposed the impact of austerity on the NHS. Cuts to beds over the years had already left the UK with, on average, just 2.54 beds per 1,000 people, one of the worst in the developed world: pre-pandemic, Japan had 13 beds per 1,000 people, Germany 8, France 6 and Italy 3.18 hospital beds per 1,000¹. Combined with high occupancy rates, the shortage of beds has contributed to the NHS being overwhelmed during the Covid-19 crisis.

Notwithstanding, GMB Union are dismayed that the proposals to remove acute services from Epsom and / or St Helier Hospitals in South West London and Surrey are continuing. In particular, it is proposed to remove Accident & Emergency, Intensive Care, Emergency Surgery, Emergency Medicine, Cancer Care, Coronary Care, Consultant-led Maternity and Paediatrics from Epsom and / or St Helier Hospitals.

The proposals would mean fewer hospital beds, fewer consultant doctors, further to travel for many people and more deaths.

GMB Union has responded to the consultation, slamming the proposals as a major risk to life.² However, I am stunned that the consultation process regarding the above was not immediately stopped and all such plans withdrawn when the nation was hit with the coronavirus pandemic. The services in question are demonstrably of critical importance to the communities they serve.

GMB Union is now requesting that the government directly intervene in this matter and withdraw all plans to remove acute services from Epsom and / or St Helier Hospitals with immediate effect.

Yours sincerely

Helen O'Connor

Helen O'Connor
GMB, REGIONAL ORGANISER

¹ <https://data.oecd.org/healtheq/hospital-beds.htm>

² GMB response to consultation:

[www.gmb-southern.org.uk/assets/attachments/Response%20to%20Consultation\(1\).pdf](http://www.gmb-southern.org.uk/assets/attachments/Response%20to%20Consultation(1).pdf)

We would also draw your attention to the response from the Keep our Epsom and St Helier Hospitals campaign group:

koshh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/KOSHH-KOEH-Response-to-IHT-Proposals-2020-FINAL-.pdf