

**Yvette Cooper**  
**Member of Parliament for Pontefract and Castleford**

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Dear constituent,

I am writing as I promised to update you on the plans for Pontefract General Infirmary and to ask for your help in the campaign for consultant led Accident and Emergency Services in Pontefract.

The Mid Yorkshire NHS Trust which runs Pontefract, Pinderfields and Dewsbury hospitals has announced that it will decide on the future shape of A&E services at Pontefract by the middle of March as part of their response to a recent independent review of service plans. It is therefore crucial that we demonstrate the strength of local feeling over the next two months.

As you may remember the Government has allocated substantial new hospital investment for this area after extensive lobbying by all the local MPs. This includes a £50 million new hospital building at PGI and a new acute centre of excellence at Pinderfields. I believe this new investment is extremely welcome as it is a vital opportunity to develop new state of the art facilities at both ends of the district and to substantially improve patient care. Without the investment both hospitals are at risk of long, slow decline.

But as MPs we have also argued that Mid Yorkshire Trust must get the detail of the service plans right for the new hospitals, to make sure that patients at this end of the district get the best possible care.

When the proposals for a new hospital were first put forward eight years ago, local health officials and medical staff argued that hospital services needed to change to improve quality and address safety concerns. They proposed that some services should become more specialised and be provided within an acute centre of excellence at Pinderfields, whilst others should be delivered in GP surgeries instead. That is why people already travel to Leeds for many cancer treatments, heart operations or head injuries, and to Pinderfields for burns treatment or acute surgery. It is also why new GP surgeries have opened with facilities for more local treatment and care.

However, Hemsworth MP Jon Trickett and I have argued from the beginning that we also need a strong future for Pontefract General Infirmary. Everyone recognises services need to be modernised to ensure they are safe and high quality. But we also want to know that the majority of patients will still be able to visit PGI for treatment and diagnosis. In particular we want to know that important services like A&E will continue at PGI. We need to be sure that services are being planned around patient care not administrative convenience. Health officials need to consider access and travelling times as well as clinical standards when deciding where services are based.

That is why we have been campaigning from the beginning for improvements to the plans for Pontefract, and why we called for an independent review of all the plans last year. The

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Review was conducted by national clinical expert, Professor Ara Darzi, and published in the summer. It strongly supported the new hospitals but recommended that improvements should be made to the plans for Pontefract.

In particular, Professor Darzi's report revealed that local health officials were only planning a GP service instead of A&E at Pontefract. The report clearly recommended that PGI should continue to have a consultant led A&E service. I believe it is vital that the Mid Yorkshire Trust accept Professor Darzi's recommendation to provide consultant led A&E at PGI. We have campaigned for years to prevent A&E being replaced by a part-time service or nurse-led minor injuries unit. Now national experts have backed local people's views.

Now we need to make sure the Mid Yorkshire Trust are aware of the strength of local feeling in support of consultant led A&E services. That is why I am circulating copies of petitions which I intend to present to local health officials by the end of February.

I am enclosing a copy of the petition and I would be very grateful if you could ask friends and family to give their support to our campaign by adding their names. Please return any signed petitions to my office.

I will also continue to press the Mid Yorkshire Trust on a range of other issues affecting PGI, including the need to keep some of the existing buildings as well as the new building so that there are more beds and enough capacity for the long term future of services. As a result of our campaigning the Trust have now accepted that their original proposals for just 55 beds were completely inadequate, but I am continuing to argue strongly for improvements.

The Trust have said they will be consulting on other aspects of service plans, so I will keep you in touch with further details as they emerge. I shall also be meeting with patients' groups, medical staff and community groups. Please do not hesitate to contact me in the meantime with further views or questions about the way forward. And do send back any petitions that you have.

Best wishes



**Yvette Cooper MP**