

## **Core Health Services**

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

*Worthing Herald Article*

*8<sup>th</sup> October 2020*

Some constituents ask me to vote against the government on a issue or express concerns about an aspect of policy. I try to limit my rebellions.

This week I spoke and voted for greater protection for leaseholders vulnerable to opportunist planning applications by a landlord seeking money by replacing a block of flat's roof with the addition of one storey or two. Too often, lease-renters catch all the costs and inconvenience. The freeholder is worry-free as ground rents flow in.

Parliament has for nearly 20 years intended to bring in commonhold, the better system where the leaseholders are also the freeholders.

Health and social care is one policy area where there is often agreement. The all-party Health Select committee is chaired by Jeremy Hunt, a friend who came second in last year's selection of the Conservative leader and prime minister.

This week's Committee Report rightly assesses and makes recommendations on communication with patients; managing waiting times and the backlog of appointments; routine testing of staff and their access to personal protective gear; "burnout" facing NHS and care staff; and the lessons to learn from the Covid pandemic to support the NHS in the future.

Patients and service users can be left in limbo. There were sometimes necessarily missed, delayed and cancelled appointments across non-Covid services. Importantly, the committee consider diversity and race in the NHS and the need to support Black, Asian and minority Ethnic staff.

The dual challenge to the NHS and social care system was to ensure swift effective medical treatments for those who contracted the virus, while maintaining support for continuing health and care for people not affected by Covid-19. This critically includes mental health care and associated support services.

On Tuesday we heard welcome news that the backlog in breast screening has mostly gone. I hope this is true for older men's screening for possible abdominal aortic aneurysm. Delivery of dental services was hindered if not halted by the pandemic, with financial challenge to private dental practices and to NHS dentistry. I join the plea for a public plan to meet patient needs in the safest way.

On testing we must create capacity to offer routine testing to care staff and NHS staff with quick test results. I agree with the Select committee request that the NHS consider the necessary specific steps to support the mental and physical wellbeing of all staff, with plans to deal with sustained workplace pressures because of the current pandemic and the backlog associated with coronavirus. We need a People Plan for social care staff.

The head of NHS England Sir Simon Stevens states: "there are systemic features of discrimination and racism, and the NHS is both part of the problem and part of the solution". More must be done to ensure that all staff, regardless of their race, ethnicity or cultural heritage, feel and are safe, confident and proud to work within the NHS.

As part of support for accident and emergency departments, including the brilliant service at Worthing hospital after our campaigning lifted the threat to the hospital, we expect the results from trials of '111 dial first' schemes for triaging of patients before they might attend A&E departments. Paramedics can often help on site rather than just running a transport system.

As and when there is a local outbreak here or anyway, remember the dedication and giving of self by all the staff involved, and remember too the managers, the trade union representatives and the public who maintain their support.