

Advertising Feature

# Improving our NHS in Stourbridge

**By Margot James, the Conservative Party's parliamentary candidate for Stourbridge**

I wrote a few weeks ago about the economic crisis and the tough choices that the next government, whoever wins the general election, is going to have to make. People are understandably concerned about public services. Most of all people are concerned about health. I share that concern. Health is the one service we all will all need to use throughout our lives. I have worked in the NHS as a mental health manager, served on the board of an NHS Trust and at times of family illness experienced the NHS as a carer - and there have been times when terminal illness and other serious health problems have completely taken my family over.

We came to depend utterly on the NHS. That is why I care passionately that the NHS continues to be there for everyone, regardless of their ability to pay.

## Making the NHS even better

We have to face facts. Cancer care still delivers better outcomes in Germany, France and other European countries than we manage here. Hospitals are much cleaner in those countries so they have lower hospital infection rates.

Earlier this year Russells Hall Hospital, about which I get many good reports, failed a hygiene inspection. Patients do not have confidence in basic cleanliness; they are worried that if they go in to hospital they will pick up a serious infection.

The NHS is capable of amazing and life-prolonging service; but it is also capable of an unfeeling response to ill health and the callous neglect of vulnerable older people.

## Where has all the money gone?

This government has boasted of how much more it has spent on health. Under Labour NHS spending has tripled. But productivity - by which I mean the number of operations and other health interventions - has actually fallen by 4%. The fact is that too much of the money spent on the NHS has been directed at management and failing systems. Labour have re-organised management nine times in twelve years, resulting in 80% more managers.

Our hospitals have to grapple with more than a hundred centrally imposed targets. Measuring against those targets consume vast management resources. GPs in Stourbridge tell me that an army of

managers has been recruited whose sole job is to code and organise the new 'Choose and Book' system of making hospital appointments.

## How we'll make a difference

The NHS is far too centralised. A Conservative Government will reduce this control from Whitehall and its regional offices and give more powers to local hospitals and GPs.

The pressures of an ageing population and new technologies on the cost of care are real. The Conservative Party will meet those challenges. We will maintain spending on the NHS but we will also bring the cost of management down by a third.

Patients and their families need to have more say over their healthcare. The service needs to be transformed from "you get what you're given" to "how can we help you?"

I care about the NHS - and I want to use the experience I have working within the service to help our healthcare here in Stourbridge become more responsive to the needs of patients and families.

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