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**Press release**

**4 August 2008**

**IRP submits report to Health Secretary**

The IRP, the independent expert on NHS service change, has submitted its report and recommendations on contested proposals for changes to maternity and related services in East Sussex to the Secretary of State for Health, Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP.

Dr Peter Barrett, Chair of the IRP, said: "Each review we undertake is different so it has been important for us to hear the views of people living and working locally. We have met with a wide range of people during our review, including those using maternity services, clinicians, staff, interest groups, local authority representatives and MPs. The key focus throughout our review has been the quality of care provided to women and their families in East Sussex. Our job is to provide recommendations to the Health Secretary that will offer people safe, sustainable and accessible healthcare services."

The Health Secretary's request for the IRP's advice followed a referral from the East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The referral related to proposals put forward by East Sussex Downs & Weald and Hastings & Rother PCTs to reconfigure maternity, specialist baby care and gynaecology services provided by East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust.

The final decision on changes to services in the area will be made by the Health Secretary, once he has had time to consider the IRP's recommendations. The IRP expects to publish the full report on its website in early September.

**ENDS**

**For further information please contact the IRP press office on 020 7025 7530 or email [IRPpressoffice@trimediauk.com](mailto:IRPpressoffice@trimediauk.com)**

## NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The full name of the IRP is the Independent Reconfiguration Panel
2. The IRP was set up in 2003 to provide advice to the Secretary of State for Health on contested proposals for health service change in England
3. Under section 244 of the NHS Act 2006 NHS organisations must consult their local authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees on any proposals for substantial changes to local health services. Under section 242 of the NHS Act 2006 NHS organisations must undertake appropriate public engagement. The OSC may refer the proposals to the Secretary of State under regulation 4(7) of the Local Authority (Overview and Scrutiny Committee Health Scrutiny Functions) Regulations 2002
4. IRP panel members have wide ranging expertise in clinical healthcare, NHS management, public and patient involvement and handling and delivering successful changes in the NHS
5. Further information, including details of all panel members, is available from [www.irpanel.org.uk](http://www.irpanel.org.uk)

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