



## News Release

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For Immediate Release

### New look at maternity services

An independent panel will weigh up NHS proposals to change maternity services in Eastbourne and Hastings, following a decision by Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Health.

East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) has welcomed his announcement that the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) will carry out a full review of the proposals and investigate the concerns raised by the Committee when it referred the matter to the Secretary of State earlier this year.

Cllr Sylvia Tidy, HOSC Chairman, said:

“Local mothers-to-be deserve the very best in maternity services. The IRP can help us ensure this happens. Their job, as independent experts, is to weigh up the pros and cons of these proposals and give informed advice to the Secretary of State as to how maternity services in Eastbourne and Hastings should be configured. HOSC will work closely with the IRP panellists to ensure a full and thorough review takes place.”

East Sussex Downs and Weald and Hastings and Rother Primary Care Trusts are making the case for one consultant-led maternity service at Hastings and a midwife-led birthing centre at Eastbourne.

Over the next month, the IRP will discuss the issues with a wide range of stakeholders - from obstetricians and midwives to local campaigners, NHS bosses and HOSC members. It will also consider additional submitted evidence, such as the business case behind the proposals as put forward by the county's Primary Care Trusts, and HOSC's findings following its scrutiny of the 'Fit for the Future' plans.

The review will draw to a close in mid-June. After that, the IRP will make recommendations to the Secretary of State who is expected to announce his decision in the autumn.

#### Notes for editors

- HOSC supports local people, by examining all major health-care decisions taken within the county. It acts as a 'critical friend' by suggesting ways that health related services might be improved.
- HOSC is made up of members of local district and borough councils as well as the county council, with additional members representing the voluntary sector, and the East Sussex Local Involvement Network (LINK).
- Details of HOSC's referral to the Secretary of State can be found on the HOSC website [www.eastsussexhealth.org](http://www.eastsussexhealth.org)



The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is managed by East Sussex County Council and works in partnership with Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Rother District Council and Wealden District Council.

- The Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) advises the Secretary of State for Health on contested proposals for health service change in England.
- The IRP is an independent, advisory, non departmental public body and is independent of politicians and the NHS. It is made up of experienced clinicians, managers, and lay members who have wide-ranging expertise in clinical healthcare and NHS management, involving the public and patients.
- Contact the IRP by tel. 020 7389 8047, or email [irpinfo@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:irpinfo@dh.gsi.gov.uk)  
Media enquiries to tel. 020 7025 7530, or email [IRPpressoffice@trimediauk.com](mailto:IRPpressoffice@trimediauk.com)  
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