

Council Statement

Chorley and South Ribble A&E Department

The residents of Chorley are extremely concerned about the lack of progress being made with regards to filling the necessary middle-grade doctor posts so the vital service can be re-opened.

We have met with hospital bosses on several occasions to try and make progress but it seems like they are not willing to listen or take on our ideas.

We appreciated it would take time to recruit the doctors needed but we feel the whole situation has been poorly managed from the start. We were told 'everything possible was being done' to recruit the doctors but we are seemingly no further forward and we are more than a month on since the temporary closure.

We keep hearing how neighbouring hospitals haven't been affected but we really don't believe that's the case. As councillors we are getting people telling us every week that they've had to travel further to get treatment and it really isn't on.

Even if the hospital trust do believe it is having little impact what about that case where spending another half-an-hour in an ambulance costs them their life – it is gambling with people's lives and that is not fair.

In the last fortnight our Leader and MP met with hospital bosses to suggest a way forward whereby they would produce a plan and a timeline for re-opening. It would be reliant on other organisations doing their bit and supplying doctors but it would have given everyone the reassurance they needed that re-opening the A&E department was a priority and we could have lobbied those organisations to make sure they do their bit.

We are still waiting for that plan.

We do not think that the Trust is being sufficiently assisted or challenged by key partners providing real leadership of the local health system. This includes:

- Chorley and South Ribble CCG, led by Gora Bangi
- Health Education England, led by Ian Cumming
- NHS Improvement, led by Jim Mackey

To ensure that when the A&E department does re-open it can be done in a sustainable manner we are also urging a review of the procurement exercise for the urgent care centre so that it operates well as the two must work in harmony to prevent problems that have occurred elsewhere.

Consideration should be given to stopping the current procurement process, which has dragged on for far too long, to consider how local public services would best run the urgent care centre. Not to do so increases the risk of creating further instability in local health services, and will not support the sustainable re-opening of the emergency department at Chorley.

Our fight to get the A&E re-opened has unified the whole community in a way that we've not seen for many years and I think it's about time the hospital trust were more open and transparent with residents about what their future plans are for the hospital.