



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Rachael Hamilton MSP
Member for Ettrick, Roxburgh & Berwickshire

20th May 2024

Dear First Minister,

Community hospitals in the Borders are under threat with NHS Borders suggesting that up to 92 community hospital beds in Kelso, Duns, Hawick, and Peebles may be closed.

NHS Borders have been clear that beds will be closed without ‘assurances of a safe medical model’ once temporary support arrangements from NHS Borders doctors and nurse practitioners come to an end in August.

NHS Borders has launched a review of the sustainability of medical cover in Community Hospitals. They have stated that the review “will help us to redesign our services to provide care at the right time and in the right place and ensure that we will be delivering quality care and sustainable services in the long term.”

This comes at the same time that NHS Borders are set to make significant cost saving cuts to frontline services as they face an opening deficit of £28.1 million.

The situation is causing widespread concern and anxiety across the Borders with almost 4,000 residents already signing a local campaign to protect the community hospitals.

The Scottish Government must step in to ensure that residents maintain sustainable access to the first-class treatment options that community hospitals provide.

With delayed discharges in the Borders already some of the worst in Scotland, any further cuts to community hospital beds will have a significant impact on healthcare provision across the Borders.

Staff in community hospitals have now also been placed in an unfair position to maintain the status quo without a long-term workforce plan in place that is supported by NHS Borders employees.

I’d be grateful if you could please outline what actions the Scottish Government is taking to support community hospitals in the Borders. I would also welcome a meeting with yourself and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care to discuss the wider concerns regarding healthcare in the Borders.

Yours sincerely,

Rachael

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