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Malcolm Alexander
Patients' Forum for the LAS
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39-41, North Road
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Date: 7 November 2006

Dear Mr Alexander,

It was with interest that we read the open letter the Patients Forum of the London Ambulance Service has sent to the Secretary of State for Health concerning the proposed changes to patient and public involvement.

Patient and public involvement in healthcare is something we both take very seriously. In May 2004 the London Assembly Health Committee and Association of London Government published a report into the London Ambulance Service. Elizabeth was Chair of the Committee then and several of the recommendations of this report stressed the need to have adequate, and well resourced, forums through which the voice of patients and the public can be heard.

In response to the flawed plans laid out by the Government, flaws your letter to Patricia Hewitt lays out clearly, the Conservative Party has launched a consultation on an alternate plan. Under this plan, a new body named "Health Watch" would be set up. This would be an independent, national body with statutory powers to represent patients, monitor the health services and refer matters to the health service regulatory bodies.

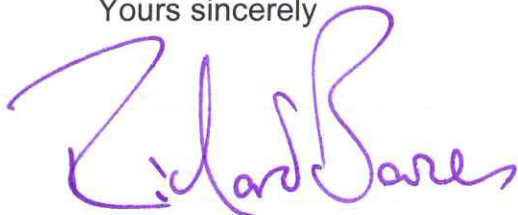
Further details can be found on the Conservative Party website, or by contacting John Baron MP, Shadow Health Minister, at the House of Commons. All responses to the consultation should also be sent to him there.

You may also be interested to know that the House of Commons Health Committee has just announced it will commence an enquiry into patient and public involvement in the NHS early in 2007.

Both of us are members of the London Assembly's Health and Public Services Committee and will raise this issue whenever there is an opportunity to do so.

We hope this has been of some help, and if you wish to contact either or both of us about this issue in the future, please do not hesitate to do so.

Yours sincerely



Richard Barnes, AM
Conservative London Assembly Member
Ealing and Hillingdon



Elizabeth Howlett JP AM
London Assembly Member
Merton and Wandsworth