

Lessons learnt the hard way

South West Clinical Senate
Clinical Review Masterclass
30th March 2017

What is the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) ?

- A Non Departmental Public Body set up in 2003 to advise on contested service change
- Members are public appointments
- The current Chair is Lord Ribeiro
- There are 15 panel members (5 clinical, 5 lay, 5 managerial)
- Supported by two staff

What the IRP does

- **Formal Role** – Advises Secretary of State on contested proposals for health service changes in England
- **Informal Role** – Responds to requests for information and promotes the sharing of knowledge and experience in the field of service change.

Formal Role

- Local Authorities may use scrutiny powers to refer NHS decisions to the SofS if they are not satisfied they have been consulted adequately or if they consider the proposal is not in the interests of health services in the area
- An initial assessment will advise further action locally, or reject the referral, or propose full review
- Full review is a last resort and the majority of referrals are resolved without one

Learning from referrals and reviews

- From over seventy referrals and twenty one full reviews, here is a distillation of what makes successful service change more likely

Critical success factors (1)

- Open community and stakeholder engagement from the first stage of considering change
- A clear vision for health and care of the community that provides the context for service change
- Money, transport and emergency care are addressed explicitly and openly
- A case for change that credible clinicians advocate

Critical success factors (2)

- The benefits of change are articulated and communicated
- Implementation plans are comprehensive and credible to the public
- Process is planned from beginning to end so that consultation is truly meaningful and responses are given proper attention before final decisions

Current observations

- 2010 “four tests” have stood the test of time
- The 2012 Act and associated regulations raised the bar for all parties
- The NHS’s duties to involve are continuous and unaffected by initiatives such as STPs, new care models etc.
- Workforce is back as both constraint and driver
- 2017 “bed closure test”
- Where status quo is unsustainable and changes disputed, what is the alternative?

- **Contact and further information**

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-reconfiguration-panel>