



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr John O'Brien – Chair
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board (ICB)
Gemini House Cambridgeshire
Business Park
Ely
CB7 4EA

19 February 2025
SB136536

Re Wisbech Community Diagnostic Centre

Dear Mr O'Brien

Despite £2.1 million of investment in a state-of-the-art Community Diagnostic Centre, little appears to have been done to recruit sufficient staff and signpost services to Fenland patients. It is now almost two years since this CDC first opened in April 2023, which provides ample time for staffing to be prioritised, and the public to be encouraged to use it.

The ICB are diverting patients from Fenland, an area with higher health needs, to those areas of Cambridgeshire that are wealthier, healthier and benefit from better health services. This is perverse, particularly when at the same time hiring staff in diversity, equality and inclusion roles and publishing endless documents stating a commitment to addressing health inequalities. The ICB is doing the very opposite through its failure to fully utilise the Wisbech CDC.

This failure is made worse because I previously raised concerns, and received assurances from the ICB, regarding patient access to services at the Wisbech CDC. Further, new information received this week suggests the ICB has misled the public.

When I previously raised concerns regarding the Wisbech CDC, Cambridgeshire ICB wrote to me on 23rd November 2023 stating "Mobile CT and MRI units are in place and fully operation", and "the Mobile MRI unit at Wisbech CDC will temporarily move to Ely CDC by 8th December 2023. Moving the unit will enable people in Ely to benefit from MRI scans closer to their homes, whilst essential electrics work is being undertaken at the Wisbech site to allow MRI and CT scan units to move away from generator use and onto mains power. Once these works are complete in early 2024, the MRI unit will be installed back on site at Wisbech CDC".

New information received this week suggests the MRI unit was not returned in early 2024, is still not at the Wisbech CDC site a year later, and the ICB has no plans to return it. Yet this major cut in accessible screening services for cancer and other patients living in Fenland has not been shared with elected representatives or the public.

The ICB is also acting to suppress patient demand for services at the Wisbech CDC by not allowing patients to book appointments on the NHS App, not promoting appointments via local GPs, not running a public information service to flag the services available, and not prioritising staffing of this facility above other recruitment like for diversity and inclusion roles or hiring elsewhere in the county. Again, there appears to have been no communication from the ICB with elected representatives or the public. This is despite the ICB spending significant sums on a large communications team.

It is not clear why the ICB has reneged on past commitments to patients in Fenland. The only explanation given to date is to suggest a lack of patient demand, which appears odd given high waiting lists and the lack of any effort to raise public awareness. It is also unclear what the board of governors has done to challenge health managers regarding the failure to fully utilise the significant investment in the Wisbech CDC facility, or to use it to address health inequalities within Cambridgeshire.

I would be grateful if you can share an update addressing the point below:

- When will the MRI unit return to Wisbech as previously promised, and what is required before it does so?
- When will the Wisbech CDC be fully integrated into the NHS app, and why has this not been done sooner?
- What will be done to encourage Fenland GPs to book patients into Wisbech CDC?
- What prioritisation has there been of staff recruitment to enable patients to fully utilise the Wisbech CDC, and what further recruitment is planned?
- When will a plan be published setting out how the ICB will boost utilisation of the Wisbech CDC, including an awareness campaign for patients, with targets for the number of patients to be seen over the next 12 months?
- When will the ICB publish by postcode, and by population group, data on the take up of screening programmes to clarify whether, as I believe to be the case, Fenland has lower patient participation compared to other parts of Cambridgeshire?

I am copying this letter to the Leader of Fenland Council, the Clerk of Wisbech Town Council, the Clerks of Fenland parish councils, and to members of the governance board of the ICB. I have also attached below the monthly breakdown of patient numbers at the Wisbech CDC provided by the ICB.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Barclay MP