

National Association of LINKs Members

Patient and Public Involvement in Health and Social Care

June 10th 2009

Stephen Hay
Chief Operating Officer
Monitor
4 Matthew Parker Street
SW1H 9NL

Dear Stephen,

I wrote to you on November 4th on the issue of FT Board Meetings. On that occasion I said:

"Another issue causing great concern is about access to meeting of FT Boards. Many of our members complain that FT Boards are now closed to the public and that consequently FT status has been used to reduce accountability and diminish public access to decision making in the NHS. Your views would be very welcome."

You will also be aware of the following statements made to the Health Committee on June 3rd 2009.

Mr Bradshaw: We have made quite clear in our response to the David Colin-Thomé and George Alberti reports that we think boards should meet in public. We are absolutely explicit in our response. I am sure you have read our response, it is not very long and it is quite pithy. There will of course be occasions where a board, for whatever reason, is discussing something of some commercial confidentiality and so on, but certainly this ministerial team has always made quite clear that our view is that NHS boards should meet in public.

Q1057 Dr Stoate: That is your view and it is certainly my view as well, but why is not a requirement - apart from very sensitive or financially commercially sensitive issues - that they meet in public?

Mr Bradshaw: We do not have the power to require that of foundation trust boards.

Q1058 Dr Stoate: Should we not have? I am very concerned that if they want to they can lock the doors and get on with it and I am not sure that that is the culture you are looking for.

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Mr Bradshaw: We have been as clear as we can be as to what our views are and I think Monitor have been as clear as they can be. If there are still foundation trust boards that are not or never meeting in public then that is something that those boards themselves need to address. However, we are considering at the moment - not just in the context of foundation trust boards meeting in public or private but also in relation to some other issues we may come to discuss in a moment about personnel matters and foundation trust management and boards - whether we may need to take further powers.

Q1059 Dr Stoate: *Are you prepared to take further powers if necessary to ensure that they do open up?*

Mr Bradshaw: We are prepared to consider what extra powers we think the government may need to take to ensure that we have a system where, given that ministers are responsible and accountable to Parliament as I am here today, yet we do not currently have the powers to make the effects and the changes that we might need to do to satisfy committees like this.

Clearly Monitor has recently come under a great deal of criticism especially in relation to the events at Mid Staffordshire. Can you now give me your assurance that you will advise all FT Boards to hold their meetings in public?

I think it would be very useful if we could meet to discuss this issue and the perceived failing of Monitor in relation to Mid Staffordshire Hospital.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Malcolm Alexander
Chair