

DOMINIC MARTIN

Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Spokesperson
for East Hampshire



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Andrew Gwynne MP
House of Commons
London
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Dear Minister,

Healthcare in Hampshire

I write as Liberal Democrat parliamentary spokesperson for East Hampshire, where earlier this year the Liberal Democrats almost overturned a Conservative majority that has existed for nearly 150 years.

On 20 November, my friend and colleague Danny Chambers, MP for Winchester, initiated an adjournment debate on the future of healthcare in Hampshire. I won't repeat the many important points that Danny made about primary and secondary healthcare in the debate, except to say that I associate myself fully with his remarks. In your response to the debate, you made a number of commitments to the House; and the purpose of this letter is to encourage you to deliver on those commitments as soon as possible.

As the statistics you yourself quoted demonstrated, the failings of the healthcare system in Hampshire deepen each year. I was pleased to hear that you are not prepared to "sugarcoat" these problems and that you wanted to work with colleagues across the House to fix them together. Although I narrowly missed out on being one of those colleagues, I would be very happy to contribute to those efforts, representing the party that secured 34% of the vote in the East Hampshire constituency.

I particularly encourage you to deliver on your commitment to "fix the front door to the NHS" by improving access to GP services. During the General Election campaign, this was the single issue that came up most frequently on the doorstep. For example, the closure of the GP Practice in Bentley and the consequent pressures it put on already stretched GP services in Alton was an issue of deep concern to many in the northern parts of the constituency. There are similar stories across the rest of East Hampshire. We must move as soon as possible to a primary healthcare system where everyone can see a GP within seven days – and within 24 hours if the case is urgent.

Continued overleaf

I was also glad to see that you recognised that levels of access to NHS dental services in East Hampshire were unacceptable and that a reform of the NHS dental contract was overdue. You quoted statistics for the whole of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board. But I fear the situation in East Hampshire may be even worse. At the time of the election, I was told the waiting list to become a patient of the sole NHS dentist in Petersfield was around 6,000 – in a town which has a total population of 15,000.

East Hampshire is on paper one of the least deprived constituencies in the country. But if you simply looked at the healthcare statistics, that is not the impression you would draw. So I again encourage you to make improving healthcare in Hampshire a priority for your department and repeat my offer to help in whatever way I can to contribute to that objective.

With best regards,

Dominic Martin

Parliamentary Spokesperson for East Hampshire
Liberal Democrats