

View From the House

In the House, the Secretary of State for Health showed that he had completely misunderstood how upset junior doctors are about the new contract he has deemed necessary. And the sight of junior doctors balloting to go on strike means negotiations have broken down because strikes, particularly in the NHS, are a last resort.

As a member of the Health Select Committee throughout the last Parliament, I heard from many experts giving evidence who questioned the Health and Social Care Act, the strategy of freezing pay, not investing in training and the NHS in real terms.

Recruiting staff is just one pressure point in the NHS. At the University of Wolverhampton there were 6,146 applicants who met the entry criteria for just 559 nurse training places. I was able to ask the Leader of the House that this would obviate the need to recruit from abroad. Walsall Manor this year had to recruit 65 nurses from abroad owing to the shortage. This also applies to doctors. The Government should work with universities. There are many applicants with the grades but they are turned away owing to a lack of places.

This is extending to other public services such as teaching. Now schools have to look to other countries to recruit teachers because nearly four in ten newly qualified teachers leave after the first year. The Police service has been asked to look at savings which as one constituent put it is on the same level of that in 1970s and this has an effect on the administration of justice. Good public services are vital to the infrastructure of society. Acting in the public interest for the benefit of society as a whole with a motivated and committed professional workforce is the ideal. The proposed Combined Authority will mean power in the hands of one elected official, a depleted local government and contracts handed out without local accountability.

A special service was held at St Margaret's Church Great Barr on 18 October 2015 to "celebrate and lament" memories of Barr Colony: those who lived worked and supported people at St Margaret's Hospital. One of the stories was of the last person who left the premises. She was instructed to lock the door. No-one collected the keys.

Revd Martin Rutter gave us a timely reminder of how the hospital helped servicemen in the two World Wars. We will always remember them and the community at St Margaret's.

Valerie Vaz MP

18 October 2015