

File whole please!

CITIZEN INSIGHT asks: Should Standish Hospital be closed?

A chance to make your own mind up

THE proposed closure of Standish Hospital as part of a county-wide shake-up of acute services sparked a storm of protest.

Campaigners say it is a valuable asset to the area and that residents should not have to travel all the way to Gloucester to receive medical treatment and care.

But Gloucestershire Health Authority is adamant that the small hospital should be closed. They say it is inefficient, uneconomical and does not have the equipment and facilities to provide the best possible overall care for patients.

The Citizen has decided to give its readers the chance to make up their own minds about Standish and we have asked both sides in the argument to put forward their reasons for keeping the hospital open or closing it.

Why not take part in The Citizen's Phone Poll on the issue? Ring 0891 334 236 if you think Standish should stay open.

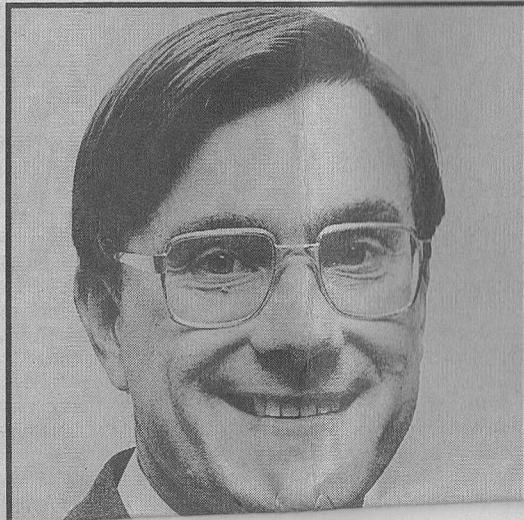
Ring 0891 334 237 if you agree with the health authority's plan to transfer its services to Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

Calls should cost no more than 10p.



■ Standish Hospital... Too valuable to lose, or becoming less and less able to meet the demands of modern health care?

It's too valuable to lose



OUR Action group was formed almost exactly a year ago as a direct result of the Health Authority's document "Towards a Better Service" which proposed the closure of this popular hospital and the transfer of its functions to the Gloucestershire Royal site.

Public opinion is overwhelmingly against the closure, and to date more than 20,000 people in Gloucestershire have indicated, by signing our petition, that Standish is too valuable an asset to lose.

Reputation

Our campaign has one basic aim

THE ACTION GROUP'S CASE

“Standish patients benefit from the outstanding expertise and dedication of close-knit, highly specialised medical teams and support services.”

accepts that Government policy of providing acute services on a single site has advantages but feels “an exception to the general rule should be made in this case.”

We do not claim that Standish is a local community hospital but recognise that it cares for patients from the whole of the health authority's area.

It has a superb record of prompt

medical teams and support services in an environment which, all agree, aids recovery.

Contrast this with the recent Citizen aerial photograph of Gloucestershire Royal Hospital! The proposed transfer will inevitably lead to the break-up of the Standish teams.

Integration with Gloucester's staff

“Towards a Better Service” and a pamphlet on the same lines.

One of the health authority's main reasons for the closure is the lack of an intensive care unit at Standish Hospital and the cost of its provision.

Transfers of patients urgently needing intensive care from and to hospitals other than Gloucester Royal are not uncommon.

Should not those people living in the more western, eastern and southern areas of the county have an intensive care unit nearer than Gloucester, Cheltenham or Bristol?

Outstanding

Capital

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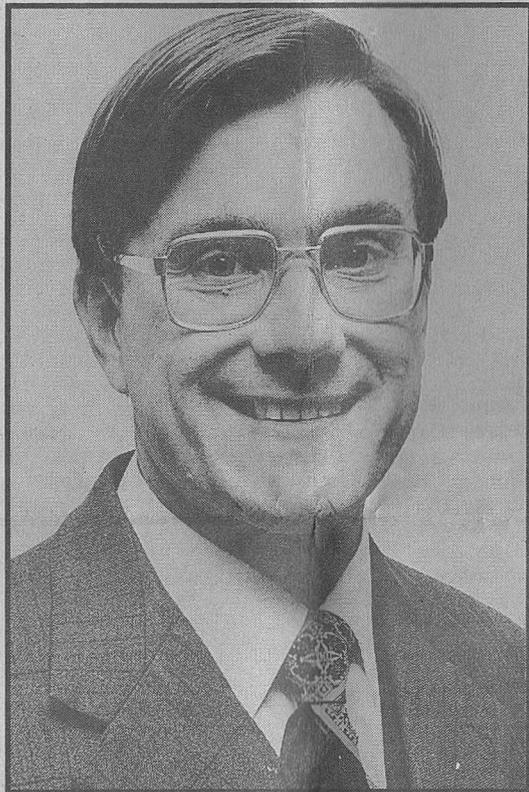


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■ Stroud MP Roger Knapman: "I will do my best to ensure that Standish Hospital remains open."

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Public opinion is overwhelmingly against the closure, and to date more than 20,000 people in Gloucestershire have indicated, by signing our petition, that Standish is too valuable an asset to lose.

Reputation

Our campaign has one basic aim - to keep Standish Hospital open as a National Health Service hospital. During the recent election, candidates of every political party supported our campaign, as have most town, parish and district councils. Stroud MP Roger Knapman stated: "I will do my best to ensure that Standish Hospital remains open."

Mr Knapman went on to acknowledge the hospital's high reputation, its fine site, and its reasonable proximity to Gloucestershire Royal Hospital. He

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accepts that Government policy of providing acute services on a single site has advantages but feels "an exception to the general rule should be made in this case."

We do not claim that Standish is a local community hospital but recognise that it cares for patients from the whole of the health authority's area.

It has a superb record of prompt and cost-effective service which is sought by, and contracted out to, other health authorities.

If its sadly-neglected facilities were repaired and extended it would attract even more patients and consequently more funds, becoming an even greater financial asset.

Instead, the health authority proposes to spend £10.5million to transfer the services to Gloucester.

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medical teams and support services in an environment which, all agree, aids recovery.

Contrast this with the recent Citizen aerial photograph of Gloucestershire Royal Hospital! The proposed transfer will inevitably lead to the break-up of the Standish teams.

Integration with Gloucester's staff, together with transfer from an area of outstanding natural beauty to a city site will surely result in a lesser service.

Centralisation will bring new problems and intensify those already existing, such as access and parking difficulties, staff turnover and financial constraints leading to cancelled operations and longer waiting lists.

The proposed closure has been hotly debated at meetings, in letters and in media reports but the only official documents made available to the public so far have been

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Outstanding

Capital charges are now levied on hitherto free assets such as land and buildings.

We are informed that concentration on the Gloucester site will save money, but are cost-cutting exercises acceptable reasons for closing Standish Hospital?

This outstanding hospital was given to the people of Gloucestershire many years ago. It must survive because of its environment, record and reputation and must not be sold off to the property speculators.

Readers are urged to support our campaign.

Transfer is the answer

GLOUCESTER Acute Unit is planning to transfer all acute services now provided at Standish Hospital to a new development within Gloucestershire Royal Hospital by the end of the decade.

There is just one basic reason - the need to make sure that the people of Gloucestershire as a whole receive the best possible health care.

The initial recommendation was made in 1987, when a group of senior doctors, nurses, managers and other health care professionals carried out a review of the services provided at Standish (which is part of the Acute Unit, based on the Royal).

Pleasant

They concluded that if patients were to continue to benefit from the best available medical care and treatment in the years to come, Standish's services should be transferred to the Royal.

There is no question that excellent care is now provided at Standish.

There is also no disputing the fact that the hospital is a pleasant place for patients, staff and visitors. Unfortunately, however, as the years go by, it is becoming less and

THE HEALTH AUTHORITY'S CASE

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less able to meet the demands of modern health care.

Standish's biggest drawback is its size. A small hospital can never provide the level of care and treatment available in a modern general hospital like the Royal, with purpose-built facilities for the different fields of medicine, vast technical resources and large-scale medical and nursing back-up around the clock.

The Royal offers sophisticated modern diagnostic techniques such as ultrasound, nuclear medicine and CT scanning.

There is a fully-equipped intensive care unit ready to provide the best possible emergency treatment at a moment's notice.

Specialists in almost every field of medicine are on hand 24 hours a day.

Many patients go through their treatment without needing these services and so are not aware of the advantages of a large acute hospital.

For some, however, they are vital.

The benefits of the congenial surroundings of a small country hospital must be weighed against this.

At present patients often have to be transferred to the Royal anyway for part of their treatment, or to see a specialist.

A further drawback is that as a small hospital, Standish has only a small team of staff, so it is difficult to arrange proper cover 24 hours a day without over-burdening doctors.

Size apart, the buildings at Standish present a major problem. Hospital buildings should be comfortable, safe, suited to their purpose and economical to run.

Keeping Standish's buildings in service will not be possible much longer unless millions of pounds are spent on repairing them and bringing them up to date - and even if that were done, they could not match purpose-built hospital buildings.

Finally, although the transfer plans are motivated by the need for

the best possible patient care, financial considerations must inevitably play a part.

A finite amount of money is available each year for the health care of the people of Gloucestershire, and it is the duty of Gloucestershire Health Authority and its provider units to use this money in the most cost-effective manner possible for the people they serve.

In the long term, spending more at Standish might keep a popular hospital open, but for the reasons explained above it would not give the community as a whole the best health care for its money.

Invested

The buildings and grounds at Standish cost a considerable sum to maintain. Transferring service to the Royal will allow this money to be invested in better patient care.

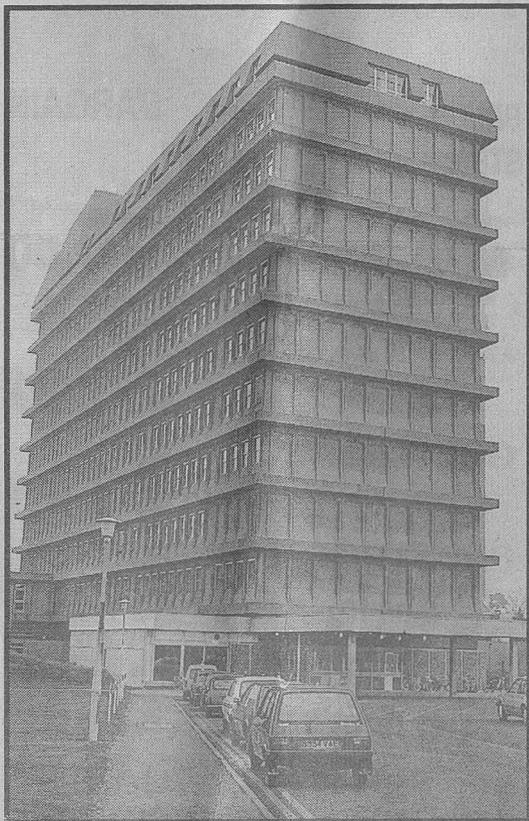
■ Please contact the following to discuss any of the above in more detail:

Mariella Dexter, General Manager, Gloucester Acute Unit.

Barbara Harris, Director of Operations, Gloucester Acute Unit.

Peter Colclough, Chief Executive, Gloucestershire Health Authority.

Caroline Fowles, Chief Executive, Gloucestershire Health Authority.



■ Gloucestershire Royal Hospital... The services currently offered at Standish should be transferred there, according to the Health Authority.