

## **Save Our Acute Services: News Release**

**13<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

**\* Department of Health challenged over absence of public engagement over hospital reconfiguration \***

**\* Consultation launched without any public meetings or even on-line events \***

Save Our Acute Services (SOAS) campaign has challenged the Minister for Health on the roll-out of his department's Public Consultation on hospital reconfiguration called 'Hospitals - Creating a Network for Better Outcomes'. The reconfiguration is one of the most strategically significant policies published by the Department. It proposes the effective downgrading of South West Acute Hospital to a 'general hospital' status with the other acute hospitals becoming 'area hospitals'.

This change threatens to permanently consign the population of Fermanagh and south Tyrone to second class status when it comes to accessing life-saving surgery.

The consultation was launched on October 2nd last but has received virtually no press coverage. There are no public consultation events planned or even online consultation events. The consultation is due to close on 22nd January 2025.

Spokesperson for SOAS Donal O'Cofaigh challenged the Health Minister Mike Nesbitt,

*"This is one of the most important consultations in decades and threatens to set in stone the downgrading of South West Acute Hospital. SOAS has been watching the department's consultation page and unbelievably there's not even a single public meeting scheduled. Indeed, it doesn't even look as if the local councils are to receive a presentation.*

*"This is the only public consultation that anyone can remember where there's virtually no press releases to encourage public participation from the department, no public consultation events or even online information sessions. It is abysmal.*

*"Does the Department genuinely think they will get away with this? If so, they are mistaken. Our community will not be silenced and our needs will not be ignored. This is simply too vital an issue to allow it to pass. The department must organise public consultation meetings and extend the deadline to allow our community to at least register our opposition. Not in our name."*

**ENDS**

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For further information or to arrange an interview, contact Donal O'Cofaigh, tel. 07375 530 941.

1. Link to Public Consultation: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/hospitals-creating-network-better-outcomes-public-consultation>