

Citation for the 'Freedom of the Borough' award to Dr Stephen Hirst

In April 2019 the Secretary of State for Health announced that the Government and NHS England were withdrawing their support for the Shaping a Healthier Future (SaHF) programme, which meant that the closure plans for Charing Cross Hospital and Ealing Hospital, first proposed in 2012, were finally dropped. This announcement marked a major victory in a long running campaign in Hammersmith & Fulham to fight the closure plans. A key part of that campaign was the work done by the Independent Healthcare Commission for North West London, which was launched in December 2014 and published its report in December 2015, exposing the deep flaws in the SaHF programme.

As a member of the Independent Healthcare Commission for North West London, Stephen Hirst oversaw the gathering of evidence that revealed the paucity of the business case that the NHS relied upon to close crucial hospital services for our residents. His medical expertise and in-depth knowledge of the health service was crucial in the analysis of the evidence that the Commission received. H&F owe him a huge debt of thanks for the time he committed to the Commission, including giving up his weekends to attend public hearings across North West London.

The Independent Healthcare Commission was the channel through which the people of North West London gained a voice, with submissions of written evidence and via public hearings. Stephen Hirst's many years of experience as a GP provided him with the practical insight and extensive local knowledge necessary to ensure the completeness of the evidence presented by the Independent Healthcare Commission in its final report.

Stephen Hirst is a retired family doctor who worked in Chiswick and Brentford. He was managing and senior partner within a large group practice. Over forty years of professional life he experienced many changes in the NHS and the GP's role. His postgraduate training was at Charing Cross Hospital. He went on to hold several posts associated with the Hospital, mostly related to teaching and training. These included working as an academic facilitator, an Honorary Senior Lecturer and also as the Postgraduate Tutor in General Practice. He was appointed as a GP Specialist Advisor to the Care Quality Commission and worked as a voluntary GP Assessor for the Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths.

The benefits of Dr Stephen Hirst's work for the Independent Healthcare Commission for North West London will be felt for years to come by current residents and future generations. The closure of two hospitals has been averted and a national government policy, that would have had such a negative impact on the healthcare of Hammersmith & Fulham residents, has been overturned.

In recognition of these achievements, it is recommended that Dr Stephen Hirst be bestowed the honour of the Freedom of the Borough.