

Day 16: Leicester to Market Harborough

Beautiful morning at Leicester Cathedral with bells ringing and people going for the Sunday service, and others coming from all over to join us for the day. Leicester city centre is undergoing redevelopment and so some of the streets are blocked off creating logistic problems. I use the time to see around the Cathedral, with the statue of Richard III whose remains were found in the Council car park and will be reinterred in March 2015. It is going to be a big event and has been described as having the "character of a state funeral without being one"; so look out for it.

Rehana is feeling a bit low as her son is going to start new school on Wednesday, and she won't be taking him there. Having met the young fella I am sure he will understand and be proud of his mum, in time.

Good to see Martin Rathfelder, who travelled down from Manchester to march today and I catch up on the news. Martin as usual is involved in various things on both sides, provider and commissioning. The big hospital reconfiguration review consultation finishes soon and it will be interesting to see what the final decision will be. Martin remembers the closure of Withington and move to Wythenshawe, an exercise which took 20 years!

We need the NHS to become more agile, but that will require lot more work and proper community engagement. Having been involved in various reconfigurations and closures during my career, there is no doubt that the NHS has a problem – and which is the general feeling that things are being done to people and not with them. The Eastbourne, Save the DGH, group has come again and shares their story of how their DGH is being systematically downgraded, with services going to Hastings, and this situation is being repeated in many other places.

It was great to walk and talk with David Nicholl from Birmingham, who brought his daughter along, and clearly David is a tweeter as he spent a lot of time on the road on his smart phone! We talk about the H&SC Bill and the medical establishment's response in 2012 – David had organised a survey of the RCP members to ascertain their views about the Bill which was still under discussion then, and only 6% of the respondents had supported it, with 69% recommending outright rejection, and the remainder suggesting other options including continuing dialogue. We wonder about the disconnect between grassroots and the leaders of the medical establishments, not just at RCP but generally, and how come the views of the vast majority get ignored; there are theories about why that happens though!

Other marchers share their observations and how between 1980s when there was one nurse for every three patients on the ward to last year when there was only one nurse for the whole ward at night, was the experience of one marcher who had been hospitalised on these occasions. They talk about their own and loved ones experiences of falling between the cracks due to increasing fragmentation of services, and especially for people with mental health and learning difficulties and of students at universities. What happened to the seamless care?

The march today was along the busy road, with much tooting from passing cars, and given safety concerns with lack of pavement on a stretch of the road we had to be

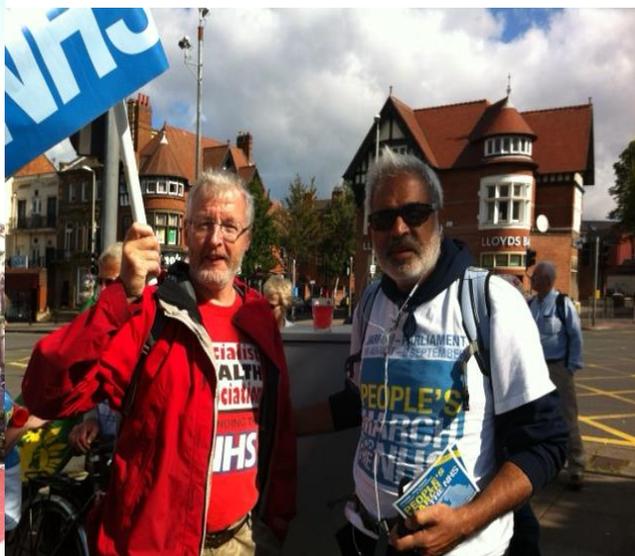
bussed across. Terry and I feel upset about doing this and so walk as far as we can before getting on the van – rebels, and creating some confusion, sorry Jo Adams!

Market Harborough town centre looks pretty and we have a good reception on arrival. It is always good to meet people who come up to you to say hello and some of them have even read my blogs! I always wonder who reads them and what do they make of them, now I know – Emma assured me that she had read the last one and will read the others – thanks.

We are being put up in the Methodist Church in Market Harborough and they went out of their way to make us comfortable. We have to find ways of amusing ourselves and the imagination runs riot, making songs and telling stories, and Trish falls about laughing seeing the horn coming out of my head!



Leicester Cathedral



Martin Rathfelder



With Emma and her son

Whatever makes you happy, Trish

Rajan Madhok

31 August 2014

DECLARATION: I am walking in personal capacity and the views expressed are mine alone, and are meant to inform not criticise or insult. If you like them, tell others and if you do not, tell me- just kidding, but do help me with my prejudices/arrogance. I may be old but can still learn. Blogs available at www.leadershipforhealth.com