

BLUNKETT QUESTIONS HEALTH BOSSES



SHADOW Health Secretary David Blunkett has quizzed health chiefs over services in Nottingham after an Evening Post campaign highlighted a beds shortage.

Mr Blunkett said he was drawn to the city after closely following the Post's campaign on the shortage of intensive care beds at the Queen's Medical Centre. Two more beds have since been promised to arrive in June.

Mr Blunkett visited die hospital because he said recent concerns over health services in Nottingham "typified the crumbling state of the NHS across the country".

He concluded his visit by saying he had nothing but praise for the staff, but called on the Government to provide the QMC with its full quota of IS intensive care unit beds.

He met chief executive David Edwards and trust chairman Martin Suthers before touring the facilities at the hospital's intensive care unit He was told by senior nurses about the urgent need for extra funding to pay the care bill for the coming year.

Mr Blunkett, who was accompanied by Nottingham South Labour MP Alan Simpson, said: "The excellent work at the QMC and the high standard of care on offer to the people of Nottingham and the Trent Region are being jeopardised by a shortage of intensive care beds.

"This is putting patients at risk and is having a detrimental, knock-on effect on other services.

"The people of Nottingham are only too well aware of the way in which the internal market in health care has fragmented and whittled away vital patient services."

He said Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley should now start coming up with some answers.

"I think the level of care and commitment at the hospital is excellent," he added. "I have nothing but praise for the staff.

"Their hopes and aspirations for the service are very good indeed.

"But they are obviously very concerned about the resources to pay the bill in the coming year out of the existing funding."

Mr Blunkett said the unit had been designed for 15 beds and it was time it had the full quota.

Mr Blunkett told the Post he would be making a follow-up visit to the hospital in June after the new beds had been installed.