

The privatisation of the NHS in Levenshulme

Levenshulme's new "GP-Led Health Centre" is not what it seems

You may have read about plans for a new clinic in the South Manchester Reporter in the last few weeks. According to Manchester Primary Care Trust (PCT), this is "an extra practice" that will "not affect any of the three existing practices in historic Levenshulme".

However, it's not quite as simple as that. In fact, these new clinics are likely to devastate local services, and they could end up affecting the NHS as a whole if we don't oppose them.



So what are "GP-Led Health Centres"?

They are a new generation of clinics very similar to the new "Polyclinics" which are causing so much concern in London.

Instead of being run by the NHS, they are to be run by private companies. The bidding for the Levenshulme contract is ongoing, so we don't know which company they will choose, but these contracts can go to anyone, including companies not known for their Healthcare credentials.

In fact, sensing untapped profit, companies from every part of the private sector are circling our NHS. Back in February, the Virgin Group laid out their plans to bid for GP Surgeries, sparking protests by NHS workers outside the Virgin Healthcare conference in Salford. **After what Virgin have done to the trains in this country, do we really want them running our health centres?**

So what are GPs saying about this?

GPs from Levenshulme Health Centre had this say:

".. These practices will be run for profit... public money meant for the healthcare of the people of Levenshulme will be paid as dividends to private individuals... General Practise is being privatised through the backdoor"

But it's not just local GPs who oppose these plans. Nationally, the British Medical Association have launched a campaign against these clinics, and delivered a petition to Gordon Brown signed by 1.2 million doctors and patients calling for these reforms to be scrapped.

Dr Chand, a GP from Ashton-under-Lyne, has been a vocal critic. He points out that these large clinics, which could hold upto 25 GPs, could end up closing down our existing health centres, so that far from "improving choice", they actually mean that local people could end up with only one choice: a private clinic. He says:

Patients will have to explain their problems all over again to a doctor they are unfamiliar with. Case records of patients may not be shared between different clinics... and clinics may be further away for some patients.

What we really need

There's no denying that Levenshulme is "under-doctored". Round here, we need all the services we can get. But we shouldn't have to put up with the privatisation of our facilities in order to get the services we deserve.

Levenshulme's existing Health Centres could provide any number of different health services for local people, including extra GPs. But they need investment to do this.

But instead of providing NHS funding for our existing facilities, the PCT are set to pay twice as much per head per patient for this private clinic. Much of this investment will go straight into the pockets of private companies as profit. **It's a waste of our money and an attack on the NHS.**

The PCT should provide our existing GP surgeries with the funding through the normal NHS channels. That is something we could all welcome without reservation.

So what can we do about these plans?

These plans aren't set in stone and we can stop them. In Herefordshire & Buckinghamshire these plans have been scrapped as patients didn't want them their "cost effectiveness" was in doubt.

Friends of Levenshulme is a local campaigning organisation. We are determined to join with local GPs to fight these plans. For more information, or to get involved in our campaign, contact us on **levenshulmecampaign@gmail.com** or put your 'phone number or postal address on our contact sheet and our petition at the reception of Levenshulme Health Centre.

Any questions or objection should go to: Nick Gomm, Manchester PCT, 6th Floor, Mauldeth House, Mauldeth Rd West, Manchester, M21 7RL

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