



PRESS RELEASE

South West London 'Keep Our NHS Public'

Health campaigners in Wandsworth have organised a public meeting, sponsored by the Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council, on Thursday 22 March at Balham Library Hall, starting at 7pm.

The focus of the meeting will be on the devastating attacks on NHS care in the Borough and the locality.

Bolingbroke Hospital in Battersea, a much loved local resource is threatened with closure. The proceeds from the sale will undoubtedly do much to shore up the debt now faced by the Hospital.

Why St George's is in debt is plain to see. The recently opened Atkinson Morley wing of the hospital was built at a cost of £55 million under one of the notorious Private Finance Initiatives- this one was financed by Blackshaw HealthCare Consortium- a bank and a building company. Over the next 30 odd years the taxpayers will be paying back around £415 million for a £55 million building-not a bad little earner some may say.

Another private consortium, Clinicenta, are to be allowed to build on St George's an independent sector treatment centre and will be paid £175 million by the NHS to perform treatments now done by St George's and other hospitals-what affect this will have on St George's own services no-one knows.

Wandsworth residents will be pleased to know that at long last St John's Therapy Centre is open on St John's Hill. What they may not know is that this new building which cost around £7 million to construct, was built under a Lift scheme-that is a Local Improvement Finance Trust-like the PFI at St George's this is a consortium of private companies. They lease the building back to the NHS and over the next 30 years we will be paying them back almost £30 million for a £7 million building-once again not a bad little investment.

The same is happening with GPs. Already, in other parts of London, private health companies are taking over GPs surgeries and practices.

As we all know GP clinics are no longer open after 6.30 or at weekends-they are now closed at the very time that people find most convenient to attend.

Private companies have cashed in on this and opened walk in centres at railway stations and other popular localities-but they are not free and people pay for this service.

'Keep Our NHS Public' which has organised the meeting on 22 March, is campaigning to end privatisation in the health service. We want a health service that is financed out of taxation and is there for people's need not to make shareholders rich.

Come along to the meeting and find out before it is too late what is happening to your National Health Service

To find out more about your local group of 'Keep Our NHS Public'-contact Mike Squires 50 Elmfield Road, Balham, SW17 8AL, tel 8673-8283, or email mikesquires@btopenworld.com