

Neighbourhood NHS meetings - Notes- 2017

I should probably start by issuing a Health warning, if you will excuse the irony! It is possible that you could feel very disheartened by this meeting/ continuing to read. However, I believe how we feel will probably depend very much on what we decide to do with the information. The last thing I want to do is leave everyone feeling helpless and defeated!

If you google Nuffield Trust NHS time line you can see in very clear and concise format - the history of the NHS and what it has cost us from its set up in 1946 to the present day.

You may have thought, as I initially did 4 yrs ago, that the privatisation of the NHS started just 5-6 years ago with a Conservative led coalition. However, that is not accurate.

As reported in the Daily Mirror on the 8th January 2016, in 1988 the conservative party policy advisor- Oliver Letwin, wrote a booklet, with another MP, called:

"Britain's biggest enterprise-Ideas for the radical reform of the NHS"

Published by the Centre for Policy Studies - a think tank set up by Margaret Thatcher

This document has been a blueprint for the privatisation of the NHS and it called for "the principle of the NHS being free at the point of use" to be scrapped" and encouraged "an increasing reliance on private health companies."

As recently as 2004 Mr Letwin was reported as saying, at a private business meeting:

"the NHS would cease to exist within 5 years of a conservative government."

Both conservative and New Labour governments have been slowly dismantling the structure of the original NHS as a publicly funded and provided health care system since as far back as the

"NHS structural Changes and Reorganisation Act" in 1973

Presented by Sir Keith Joseph who later became a minister in Margaret Thatcher's government.

The only time the dismantling of the NHS has come before parliament was in 1983- when the ideas were presented to the Conservative Cabinet. It was so strongly rejected that it was decided to complete this project covertly.

The Nuffield Time Line shows how step by step the NHS structure has been being altered to make it possible to sell it off as specific chunks to Private Health care companies who will charge for their services. All the research and change needed has been done at the expense of the taxpayer, and costs included in the "NHS Budget" by the current and previous coalition governments!

This included the introduction by New Labour, under Tony Blair, of **the PFI** funding for the NHS. This required new hospitals and large infrastructure, to be funded not from taxation but by taking out hugely expensive loans, which in fact, have been heavily responsible for the current dire debt that health trusts find themselves in.

These changes culminated in the **2012 Health and Social Care act** which put all the final legal details in place to complete the job, including **removing the obligation for the government to provide a health service** - NHS services could now be given to ANY QUALIFIED PROVIDER and the setting up of the NHS as an Independent trust- essentially a private overarching system enabling **private companies to operate under the NHS logo**.

Technically we already do not have an NHS - as was recognised in a report by The Commonwealth Fund last year.

Yet in 2014 we were still internationally rated as "the best system in terms of efficiency, effective care, safe and co-ordinated care, patient centred care and cost related problems"

Finally, last year, the now majority Conservative government, secretly devised a process by which the NHS would undergo massive conversion to a private health system. This was the enforcement of the **Sustainability and Transformation Plan**.

Changes to Junior Drs contracts are all linked to this process.

I will say more about what the STPs entail in a moment but let's ask the big question.

Why is this happening?

We are told it is due to the failure of the NHS as a project. However, there is a great deal of evidence that the **NHS failure has been deliberately engineered by intentional underfunding by a government that believes in private health care.**

Though the money attributed to the NHS has apparently gone up, the amount actually spent on services has fallen- the remainder being spent on massively expensive reorganisation and the loss of the economy of scale as service after a **service is put out to private companies all with their own backroom costs and their need to pay dividends to shareholders. (between 20-30% of our tax money is creamed off as profit and expenses).** Many of these privatisations have failed and the services have had to be urgently re-absorbed into the NHS system, costing millions

And we are in any case spending less on health than any comparable, developed country by at least 3-4% of GDP.

Over the last six years, governments, ably abetted by the media, have bombarded us with tales of woe about the NHS. We are told:

There are so many old people with multiple illnesses- we can no longer afford to treat them all. We will have to change the NHS.

But these old people were employed for most of their lives and paid taxes throughout their lives to pay for the NHS. We are told there is currently the highest employment we have had for ten years hence tax revenues have gone up! We are told that our economy is in good health! We were bankrupt after the war when the NHS was set up!!

Immigrants are overwhelming our public services such as the NHS

Immigrants, far from overwhelming our health service pay taxes which help to provide funds for the NHS (and our pensions) -their use of health services is covered by their tax revenue. **They are 26% of doctors and 11% of the whole workforce in the NHS!** Many Brits use reciprocal arrangements in other countries.

Modern drugs/ technological equipment/ treatments are so expensive we cannot afford to pay for them. We will have to change the NHS.

After WW2 our country was almost bankrupt, we had a depleted work force yet we managed to fund a brand new NHS BY BORROWING! In our domestic lives debt may be a destructive thing, but in business accounting, a debt accrued to invest in future profits is seen as credit- a benefit. Therefore, not all government borrowing is bad! If we are short of money another penny in the pound on tax for those in reliable well paid work would cover it.

HAVE WE BEEN OFFERED THAT OPTION?

Making rich individuals/ multinationals pay 20% tax like the rest of us would also help!!!!

See also most recent stats from Office for Budget Responsibility which led the Nuffield Trust to declare that the NHS is still easily fundable from taxation.

Indeed a tax funded health system is recognised internationally as the cheapest and most efficient way to fund health care.

We cannot afford an NHS because the previous (Labour) government overspent and ruined the economy. So we will have to give up the NHS!

The banking system was deregulated by both New Labour and Conservative governments from the 1980s-that means banks were allowed to make their own rules, or not have any. They created too much bad debt. Financial institutions traded in wealth that didn't actually exist- they collapsed. Public spending was less at the end of the Labour government than under Margaret Thatcher!

SO... the government used tax money from our public purse to bail out banks - which cost trillions of pounds.

If we were too short of money for the NHS that would be why! But we are not to broke to fund it!

- We were in huge debt after WW2 when the NHS was set up!!!
- The rich still keep getting richer- if we are short of money how does that work? It is where we choose to put our money that is the problem!
- We are the sixth richest country in the world.
- There is ample evidence that insurance based health provision is far more costly than publicly run tax based services. The US has the most expensive health system in the world yet 40% of their population have no health cover and 60% of bankruptcies in the US, are caused by health bills!

So if the economic/ financial reasons we have been given do not hold water, why is the NHS being privatised?

Health is one of the most lucrative, reliable, profitable businesses because most people require healthcare throughout their life.

As we saw earlier, the changes to the NHS were started over 30 years ago - long before the banking collapse- and are based on specific political beliefs.

These beliefs say that it is not just acceptable, but desirable, to make a profit out of everything, including ill health. Of course, if you are one of the people who are going to make that profit you would believe that! If you are going to lose the only hope you have of affordable healthcare for serious ailments, you will be more sceptical!

You may be interested to know that 225 MPs have present or recent financial private health care connections as in shares etc. 81% of those are conservative - which means anything up to 19% of Labour MPs could also be hedging their bets that there could be a nice little earner about to come on line!

1 in 4 conservative, 1 in 6 Labour and 1 in 10 lib /dem peers in the house of Lords have similar connections.

Many have connections with pharmaceutical companies.

And despite this conflict of interests, all are allowed to vote on issues which affect the survival of the NHS!!

In 2010 the conservative government knew that the NHS was massively supported by the citizens of the UK. They knew they could not tell us they planned to abolish the NHS to set up a private, insurance-based US style private system.

David Cameron said in 2011

"Let me make this clear, we will not be moving towards an insurance scheme, we will not introduce an American style private system. In this country we have the most wonderful precious institution and idea. I will never put that at risk"

However, last year Lord Cormack, Conservative, said in the House of Lords:

"Whether extra funding comes from compulsory insurance or certain charges matters not, but it has to come."

Investigations have shown that until very recently the BBC has barely mentioned these plans and few newspapers explain what is being done to our NHS.

When the 2012 Health and Social Care Act was passed, Michael Portillo, well-known conservative MP in Thatcher's Government said on BBC's "This Week":

"They didn't believe they could win an election if they told you what they were going to do"!

So over the years both political parties have, when in government, made changes that have created what is now referred to as the internal NHS market economy of purchasers and providers. Health Trusts are government-funded business entities which are driven by "efficiencies" and must be "value for money" and will now be expected to "turn a profit"!

The old ethos of providing universal health care based on need, not wealth, has begun to collapse and, as we will see, will cease to exist as a result of the STPs.

So let's look at what these are.

The Sustainable Transformation Plans were first **discovered** about a year ago.

Discovered by campaigners via whistle blowers, because they were **introduced in complete secrecy and were not mentioned in parliament.**

The government has created 44 "foot prints" (sound so benign) with government chosen directors.

These footprints are regions of the country which do not coincide with any current Health areas or directors. The government has acknowledged, when asked, that these organising structures do not have any legal basis as they were not brought in by an Act of parliament. **They have been overseen by Simon Stevens who spent 11 years as an advisor to a US private health company.**

Each footprint area has had to create a "sustainable plan", by July 2016, which must show how **ALL of their share of the £2.5-3.0 bn NHS debt will be absorbed into the NHS budget by 2020- this absorbing must start in 2017.**

This is on top of £22m NHS cuts to services being introduced in 2017.

These plans are now being checked by NHS England / Simon Stevens and if "satisfactory" will be implemented next year. We have reason to believe that Brighton's plans are not considered "adequate", but no one has yet seen the full content!! Government appointees are now overseeing Brighton's STP!!

They have been drawn up in conditions of secrecy imposed by NHS England - as their North Midlands Director of Commissioning Operations, Wendy Saviour, told a recent meeting of Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group:

"STPs are not meant to be published at all. They should not go to {health} Board meetings. Some of them contain very radical things... These are highly political and highly contentious. Once they're washed off and the national messages are gathered together, they will be published."

We can only guessed what "washed off" means!

The only way such a massive reduction in health funding can be made is by massive cuts to services and privatisation of many of the remaining services.

This is unprecedented since the NHS begun or in any western country.

The BBC has reported that one STP contains the information that one footprint area will end all elective hip, knee and bariatric band surgery, amongst other procedures, which will only occur on the NHS in dire emergencies!

Our local CCG (clinical commissioning group) which is made up of local GPs, who have been given the task of overseeing the transfer of NHS health services to private companies, has been put into special measures because they are seen as failing to enter fully enough into the process which the government has insisted upon. All contracts for health services now have to be put up for private tender.

STP plans have to be signed off by local councils as they are involved in funding aspects social care. This may prove a point at which to halt plans if local councils refuse to sign them off as many have already indicated they will do.

So what is all this going to mean for us?

So far it has meant:

- Up to £10bn of the NHS £113bn budget is going on privatisation
- Privatisation currently only covers about 7-10% of services but STPs will ensure that is about to increase dramatically
- Massive increases in consultant appt/ treatment waiting times
- A 25% drop in number of GPs- 6 closures in Brighton in the last two years leaving many without a GP- Eton Place, Willows, Hangleton, to name 3
- A private company called Optum vetting all GP referrals in order to reduce hospital appointments by 25%. GPs furious!!
- Privatisation of sexual health, cleaning services, food services, backroom services
- Attempted and /or failed privatisation of musculo- skeletal services locally and elsewhere
- Massive drop in number of hospital beds

- Endoscopy under a new unpleasant process because they wont employ qualified staff for the recovery room
- Many people unable to find NHS dentist- rise in childhood extractions
- Loss of much of NHS optician services
- Loss of school nursing/ dentistry services
- Child health services massively cut, health visitors will be replaced by Nursery Nurses
- Some spectacular privatisation failures which had to be urgently brought back into NHS management including Coperforma ambulance service- the failure has cost **us** millions!
- Junior Dr strikes because Drs know their working conditions will be dangerous under new contract AND they were trying to defend the NHS
- Running down of Mental Health Services ready for privatisation
- Health workers effectively had a pay freeze for 5 years
- A&E departments causing mental health breakdowns of staff and lack of safety for patients. Several been closed.
- Many medical tasks now provided by less qualified or trained staff.
- Probable total closure of 34 District Hospitals
- NHS resources which we paid for, and public land/property to be sold off
- Junior DRs and GPs leaving the NHS- most of us will not be able to afford their health care so we will need less of them!
- We don't know the details of what is next but top up fees, co-payments and Private Health Insurance are all mentioned in documents.

SO ARE WE DOOMED?!

We are if we all sit and do nothing! If we decide we are too busy to act.

The only power we have is our numbers. Probably 95% of the public use the NHS whenever they need it.

Why is there so little happening to resist - there is a lot but by just a few hundred people across the country and we are all on the verge of burn out!

There is a linked National Network of activists challenging ccgs and the government.

The Media barely said a word on these issues for 5 years. Why?

The public only know if they have been directly affected by changes.

We are all about to be directly affected when STP is implemented in 2017.

So what can we do?

JOIN YOUR LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD DEFEND THE NHS GROUP and help to inform your neighbours.

Email the local ccg and HWB and local council, saying we are against the implementation of our STP and want a publicly funded and managed NHS- not privatisation. Council can refuse to "sign off" the STP!

Support NHS staff when they are in conflict with NHS England

Display a blue poster to show where YOU stand

Talk to everyone you know about what is happening

Write to the papers

Organise more of these Neighbourhood meetings across Brighton - Create local community groups who plan publicity about the changes to the NHS

Go on our mailing list

Go on line and look at links- inform yourself on line

Donate to Defend the NHS Bank details on our website (below)

Involve people with celebrity status to gain media coverage

<http://defendthenhssussex.weebly.com>

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