

UNISON

Public Eye

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Two into one won't go: the costs and complications of switching services from Peterborough District to Edith Cavell Hospital could squeeze services

New hospital could cost an arm and a leg!

The £135m scheme for a new single-site hospital in Peterborough, approved by Health Secretary Alan Milburn in February of this year, is due to be finalised in May 2003 and operational by 2006.

But because the hospital is to be funded by private companies as part of the so-called "Private Finance Initiative" (PFI), it is certain to cost the local NHS far more than £135m, and is likely to trigger a fresh escalation in the pressure on front-line hospital services in the city.

UNISON is convinced that the scheme will set back rather than improve health services for patients. The assumptions made by local planners leave large potential gaps in care, especially for

elderly and frail patients and all those whose care would be switched from existing hospital services to vaguely-defined new services – to be delivered by already over-worked GPs and primary care staff.

Switching acute services from Peterborough District Hospital to the less accessible Edith Cavell Hospital site will also cause problems of access for those least able to drive or afford private transport.

UNISON is also concerned at the chronic lack of sufficient social service provision to support ever-larger numbers of frail elderly patients in their own homes or in nursing and residential care,

without which the new hospital will struggle to achieve its highly ambitious targets.

This is far from the first time that the health needs of older people in Peterborough and the local area have been pushed to one side by NHS chiefs eager to save money or put their hands on private capital.

But UNISON, in common with other trade unions and organisations in the city, is convinced that this PFI plan is the most serious problem so far: in our view it is a formula for failure.

Its costs, which would hang like an albatross around the neck of local health care for at least 25 years, would squeeze other important



areas of health care – mental health, community services, primary care – and worsen the problems of morale that have already affected the recruitment and retention of professional and medical staff.

We want to see new hospitals and proper investment in Peterborough's NHS: but we

don't want services distorted by the costs of a scheme which siphons cash from front-line care.

If ministers are serious in wanting to see services develop, and meeting rising public expectations, they must inject public funds, not open up the NHS to the predatory forces of private profiteers.

A few new hospitals funded by NHS capital are being built in various parts of the country. UNISON wants to see this type of investment in Peterborough.

Once an affordable source of capital has been identified, we would be happy to discuss the best model for the development of 21st century health services for the benefit of patients, health workers and the wider public.

THIS newspaper has been produced by the UNISON NW Anglia District Health Branch as a way of publicising our concerns about the proposal to build a new, privately-financed single site general hospital on the Edith Cavell Hospital site.

The plans are set out in the Integrated Health Investment Plan, supported by local health service Trusts, health authorities and Peterborough City Council.

To maximise public awareness of the issues 120,000 copies of this paper are being circulated, covering every household in Peterborough.

We welcome your comments and invite your support for our campaign. UNISON can be contacted c/o Union Office, Peterborough District Hospital, or ring us on 01733 331491

INSIDE

Play the PFI Board Game! – page 6

What is PFI? page 3

Support for UNISON campaign - page 2

Policies that fail elderly patients - p4

PFI = Profits From Illness