

# HEALTH EMERGENCY

## *The Health Watchdog*

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### PRESS RELEASE

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## Three more London Hospitals set to lose services

AT LEAST **THREE** of the six district general hospitals that are due to see services scaled down or closed in North West London have now been identified in the Integrated Strategic Plan drawn up behind closed doors by Primary Care Trusts.

The 72-page document makes clear that it seeks to “reduce the level of acute services on the **Ealing** [Hospital] site” (page 51), while it reports that “the Board of **West Middlesex Hospital Trust** have recently clarified that they do not believe that their organisation has an independent future”. **Central Middlesex Hospital**, too is identified as facing further downgrading of services to reduce it to a “local hospital”. (page 51)

With just three “major acute” hospitals to service the population of 1.9 million in eight boroughs, it is clear that three more must be scaled down, raising fears that **Hillingdon Hospital**, too, and key services at **Chelsea and Westminster** and **Hammersmith** hospitals could be scaled back, leaving just St Mary’s, Northwick Park and Charing Cross as “major acute” hospitals, and long journeys for patients from many parts of outer London needing hospital care.

The North West London cutbacks are part of a programme launched by NHS London which it admits could **axe up to a third of hospital beds in London**. From the most recent Department of Health bed figures from the capital, that could mean a massive **5,600 front-line beds** to close from a total of 16,868. Also under threat or facing virtual closure as district hospitals are **Chase Farm**, the **Whittington**, **King George’s Hospital**, Ilford, **Queen Mary’s** Sidcup and one other hospital in South East London, and **Kingston**, **Epsom & St Helier** and **Mayday** hospitals in South West London.

**This could mean tens of thousands of the most seriously ill patients in the capital being obliged to travel much further to access hospital care.**

The figures were highlighted last month in a critical BMA report *‘On the Brink’*, which links the large scale cuts to NHS London’s goal of cutting over £5 billion from health spending in the capital by 2017 as the growth in NHS funding grinds to a halt.

It points out that NHS London is seeking to divert more than half of all outpatient work in the capital (5 million appointments), and nearly two thirds of A&E activity (almost 2 million) to experimental “polysystems”, few of which as yet exist. This switch of millions of patients from hospital departments to primary care would mean London’s hospital budgets would be slashed by upwards of **£1 billion a year**, an average reduction of almost **£40m** for each of the capital’s 26 acute Trusts and Foundation Trusts – easily enough to force many of them out of business.

The NHS London plans are based on controversial estimates contained in a document by US-based management consultants McKinsey which is being kept secret, preventing any scrutiny of the assumptions and the data they have used.

**On the Brink** author John Lister said:

“Campaigns are springing up all over London as local people wake up to the threat posed to their local health services. Redbridge campaigners have been protesting for months now, as have Chase Farm. The campaign to save the Whittington Hospital is growing rapidly. And South West London campaigners have already joined forces and launched a combined fight to defend all of the local hospitals that are threatened.

“This is a problem that will gnaw away at the support of whichever party wins the election, with a succession of high-profile and possibly chaotic changes and cutbacks in the NHS, tearing the heart out of the existing hospital network, and axing thousands of health workers’ jobs.

“Whenever hospital services in London have been threatened over the years there has been a strong campaign to save them. What we don’t yet know is where many local MPs and councillors stand on the potential closure of local services. They have to decide. Will they fight with local people – or against them?”

/ ENDS

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#### **NOTE TO EDITORS:**

***On the Brink*** is published by the BMA’s London Regional Council. Their webpage can be found at:

[http://www.bma.org.uk/representation/local\\_representation/regional\\_councils/lrcreportlondon\\_snhsonthebrink.jsp](http://www.bma.org.uk/representation/local_representation/regional_councils/lrcreportlondon_snhsonthebrink.jsp)

The report’s Executive summary can be found at:

[http://www.bma.org.uk/images/onthebrinkexecutivesummary2010\\_tcm41-193387.pdf](http://www.bma.org.uk/images/onthebrinkexecutivesummary2010_tcm41-193387.pdf)

The Full ***On the Brink*** Report, which includes a full PCT by PCT analysis of the growing problems around the capital, is available:

[http://www.bma.org.uk/images/onthebrinkreport2010\\_tcm41-193388.pdf](http://www.bma.org.uk/images/onthebrinkreport2010_tcm41-193388.pdf)