

PRESS RELEASE



News from Keep Our NHS Public campaign www.keepournhspublic.com

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RISING TIDE OF OPPOSITION TO NHS REFORMS

Tony Blair's health reforms face a rising tide of opposition from doctors, nurses, and patients, which threatens to become a torrent. As nurses hold a rally in Westminster today (11 May), a new grass-roots campaign group is being launched by patients and GPs in Derbyshire, where residents and professionals are united against a decision to hand over their family doctors' surgery to a multinational corporation.

The launch of the group comes a week before that decision is subjected to a crucial **judicial review at the High Court** – a key test for a central plank of the government's health reforms.

And doctors' wider unease is being manifested in the quiet radicalisation of the British Medical Association. The Junior Doctors' Conference adopted a resolution on 6 May to support Keep Our NHS Public. The same motion may now be debated and voted on by the BMA annual conference in June.

Alex Nunns of Keep Our NHS Public said:

“The government now faces opposition to its NHS reforms from all sides – doctors, nurses and patients. The unifying message is clear – people don't want the NHS to be commercialised. Nurses are in open revolt; doctors' unease is showing in the quiet radicalisation of the BMA; and, most significantly, where patients are gaining first hand experience of Blair's reforms, they are fighting them through the courts and through grass-roots campaigns.”

In Derbyshire patients and doctors will launch the Robin Hood branch of Keep Our NHS Public in a public meeting this evening (11 May). The campaign has been galvanised by the decision of North-Eastern Derbyshire Primary Care Trust to make UnitedHealth Europe – the UK arm of America's biggest healthcare corporation – the 'preferred bidder' to run the Creswell Primary Care Centre.

The move has been stopped in its tracks by a judicial review – to be heard in the High Court next week (18 & 19 May) – which could have serious implications for government policy. The recent health white paper set out plans to open up primary care to the market by encouraging private companies to run GP surgeries and allowing them control of commissioning budgets. But in one of the first instances where this has been tried it has met strong opposition, prompting local pensioner Pam Smith to take legal action.

The Department of Health views the case so seriously it has intervened on behalf of the PCT. This will be the first test of the Section 11 consultation powers in the Health and Social Care Act 2001.

CONTACTS:

Alex Nunns 07763 607 528, konp.press@virgin.net
Elizabeth Barrett (Derbyshire GP, Robin Hood KONP) 07779 082 037

NOTE FOR EDITORS:

Keep Our NHS Public is a non-party political national campaign against the marketisation of the NHS. It brings together medical professionals, health service unions, academics, user groups, concerned citizens and well known figures such as former health secretary Frank Dobson.

Alex Nunns
Information Officer
Keep Our NHS Public
07763607528
konp.press@virgin.net
www.keepournhspublic.com