

PRESS RELEASE



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PENSIONER TAKES ON NHS TRUST OVER FAMILY DOCTOR SURGERY

A pensioner will tomorrow (18 May) challenge her local NHS trust over its selection of a multinational healthcare corporation to run her GP surgery.

Pam Smith, who is a Labour parish councillor in a former mining area of Derbyshire, has forced a judicial review into how North Eastern Derbyshire primary care trust made UnitedHealth Europe – the British arm of America’s largest healthcare corporation – its ‘preferred bidder’ to run the Creswell Primary Care Centre.

The review is a crucial test of 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 local opposition.

The Department of Health views the case so seriously it has intervened on behalf of the PCT, apparently arguing against its own rhetoric of a ‘patient-led NHS’. This will be a major test of the Section 11 consultation provisions in the Health and Social Care Act 2001, which stipulate that patients must be “involved in and consulted on” the planning, development and operation of health services.

The judicial review will take place at the High Court on Thursday 18 and Friday 19 May.

Pam Smith said:

“My parents and family have paid in to the NHS so it’s there for us. We must keep our NHS public at all costs. The Government can’t keep bringing in private companies – it’s like sharing the housekeeping money with a stranger. The stranger will take the money and leave us with nothing. I’d chain myself to the surgery door before letting UnitedHealth in.”

PHOTO OPORTUNITY: Protesters with colourful banners opposed to private companies taking over family doctors’ surgeries will gather outside the Royal Courts of Justice on the Strand at **10am, Thursday 18 May**.

Richard Stein, Pam Smith’s lawyer, will be available for comment for 20 minutes from 10am. Elizabeth Barrett, one of the local GPs whose community-backed bid for the practice was overlooked, will also be available.

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