

# Health Emergency

## *The Health Watchdog*

Press Release  
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Immediate

### **Kent County Crisis: NHS torn apart by cuts and privatisation**

Hospital and health services throughout Kent are face cuts totalling over £100m this year, with front-line NHS services, beds and jobs at risk in Dartford, Gillingham, Maidstone and Canterbury: but private sector providers, investors and management consultants are scooping up fat profits, and expanding as the NHS declines.

These are the shock conclusions from 'On the Critical List': a new detailed round-up published today by health watchdog Health Emergency (attached). It identifies the cash shortfalls hitting hospital Trusts (Dartford and Gravesham £6m; Medway £12m; Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells £34m; East Kent £35m) and Primary Care Trusts (five of which have deficits totalling £20.7m).

But it also points the finger firmly at the private sector, draining funds from patient care through the inflated overhead costs of the Private Finance Initiative hospital at Dartford (where PFI charges consume 20 percent of the Trust's budget) and threatening even heavier costs in the proposed £428m new PFI hospital in Pembury for the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Trust.

More cash is also being siphoned out of NHS Trust budgets into "Independent Sector Treatment Centres" (ISTCs), with one in Gillingham picking up guaranteed payments despite falling around 40% short of its target (and therefore collecting full funding for 2,500 operations it has not performed) while the local Medway NHS Trust makes cuts to balance the books.

Another ISTC is to be built in the grounds of Maidstone Hospital, resulting in a loss of £11m income to the Trust, while NHS staff will be seconded to work in the new unit, delivering profit to shareholders.

The report sets the scene for the launch on July 19 of a Kent-wide campaign to "Keep Our NHS Public", aiming to link health workers and professionals with patients, trade unionists, pensioners, community groups and campaigners and anyone in the wider public who recognises the chaos that is emerging as a result of the government's market-style "reforms" in the NHS.

**Kent Keep Our NHS Public**  
**Wednesday 19 July 2006**  
**7:30pm at Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone**

Launching the report, Health Emergency's Information Director Dr John Lister said:  
"This report, which is fully documented, makes grim reading. Patients and public of Kent have a stark choice. They can watch their local NHS hospitals being dismantled, with the profitable bits hived off to private profiteers and the emergency services "centralised" to one or two hospitals meaning long journeys for those most serious ill – or they can join the campaign to stop the rot.

"That's why Health Emergency welcomes the launch of Keep Our NHS Public in Kent. The privatisation and cutbacks are running hand in hand at rapid pace. There is no time to lose."

**ENDS**

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