

PRESS RELEASE



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

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Campaigners warn Blair not to play personal politics with the NHS

The Keep Our NHS Public campaign is calling on the Government to disown the idea of individual budgets and vouchers in the health service, which it says would be a move towards the end of the NHS. The call comes as thousands of NHS staff and patients take to the streets to protest at health service chaos.

Tony Blair's forthcoming health policy review will reportedly say individuals should be given money by the government to spend how they like on healthcare - even if it is in the private sector. This has raised fears of increasing costs and bureaucracy, widening health inequalities and further privatisation.

The proposal is similar to one mooted by Alan Milburn. Milburn recently launched a website with Charles Clarke, who last month called for the NHS to start charging for treatments.

Keep Our NHS Public is raising the alarm about the increasingly reckless policies being rushed out in the last months of Blair's premiership.

This Saturday, March 3rd, patients across England will unite with doctors and nurses for a day of action on the NHS. Keep Our NHS Public's network of over 30 local groups - spanning from Liverpool to Southampton and from Kent to Bristol - will be supporting and organising a plethora of events to highlight the damaging impact of the government's 'patchwork privatisation' of the health service. The actions, taking place simultaneously in over 40 locations, have been coordinated by NHS Together - the coalition of all NHS staff including Unison, Amicus, and the BMA.

Alex Nunns of Keep Our NHS Public said:

"It is clear that Blair is 'thinking the unthinkable' on the health service and coming up with ever more crazed ideas. He is being reckless with the NHS, trying to cement some kind of irreversible legacy. But here's the real legacy - his wild experiment with market forces has resulted in chaos, cuts and closures.

"Blair's potential successors for the leadership should take a look at the level of opposition shown by the national day of action. For the first time the NHS is a vote loser for Labour on the doorstep. Blair's ill thought out reforms have failed, and without a change of course this upsurge of anger could cost Labour the next election."

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