

# Save Our Surgery Tips to Help

The first time you hear that your surgery is being put out to tender, it may come as a bombshell. Here are a few things that you can do to defend your services and support the staff team.

- 1/** If you do not have a Patient Focus Group (i.e. with patients from the surgery), start one immediately. Should you already have one, get a meeting arranged ASAP.
- 2/** Have regular update meetings with the Patients Focus Group: this keeps everyone up to speed. Keep them reassured and calm and positive.
- 3/** Join Keep Our NHS Public and set up a local KONP group. USE KONP as a source of support and advice. KONP may be able to help by sending a speaker to a meeting you want to organise or by putting you in touch with others in the same position.
- 4/** Try to stay calm - this is vital. The PCT (Primary Care Trust) you will be dealing with will, so play them at their own game.
- 5/** Always remember that these people (from the PCT) have their own objectives to achieve; do not get over confident that they have become your soulmate (they never will be).
- 6/** If you ask for or are invited to a meeting with representatives from the PCT, plan and think things through before you attend. Always get one of your group to take minutes for you. Try to direct all the group's comments through one voice preferably the PFG Chair (that way you do not get loose cannons going off). Be very careful what you agree too.
- 7/** Always get your facts right. Never assume.
- 8/** Attend public meetings of the PCT and try to ask questions with regard to future plans. Write letters to the chief executive of the PCT. You can find information about who the chief executive is, what his/her address is and when the PCT holds open meetings via the internet or from your local library
- 9/** Use the Freedom of Information Act (2000) to find any statements of interest from private companies wishing to take on surgeries.
- 10/** Make contact with your Local Medical Committee and inform them of your opposition to the plans.

'democratic office' of your local council when the council's health scrutiny committee meets and how you can communicate to committee members what your objections are. You will be able to find out from your councillors or from the democratic office which council is handling the matter - Borough, County, City or Unitary.

**12/** Speak to the health reporter from the local newspaper; ask them to take a photograph of the PFG / patients outside of the surgery. Use the letters page to present the facts.

**13/** You need patient involvement. Do a rota with PFG members sitting in the surgery getting a petition signed by patients. If you have already received press coverage, ask patients if they have seen the item in the paper, then ask if they would like to sign your petition. It is vital that your group do not make a nuisance or disturb the surgery routine, or they could ask you to leave.

**14/** Encourage patients to write to the newspaper. For example, they might write a letter in response to an article. Try to spread the letters out and keep the subject on the boil.

**15/** Try to get on local radio, the more publicity the better.

**16/** Ensure that from the very start you record events, dates etc. For example, when were you first aware of any changes? Where were you? Who informed you? Monitor anything and everything that happens.

**17/** Find the local Patients Forum and the relevant contact details. If a PCT has already made a decision to invite alternative commercial providers to bid for a GP surgery, write to the Patients Forum asking the date, time, place they had been informed of the decision. Ask them what consultation the PCT had undertaken to establish the views of the Patients Forum and what actions the Patients Forum had taken to collect the views of the public and affected patients.

**18/** Organise for letters from the affected patients and others in the local community to be sent to the Patients Forum expressing views against any decision to go out to bidding and requesting that the Patients Forum represent to the PCT these views of opposition.

**19/** Once you have a good number of signatures on the petition, ask your local MP to hand it into the Speaker at the House of Commons. This may have some publicity value. Try to get him or her to support your doctors by giving them a call or a visit etc.

**20/** Read the newspapers and keep an eye out for new buildings (like Health Centres) being opened by dignitaries from the Government. Get a few of your group to go along. The newspapers should be there: any publicity is good and

concerned to put your case.

**21/** Keep in touch with others in the same situation across the country. It helps keep the spirits up whilst also exchanging ideas.

**22/** You will need to build a broad-based, popular local campaign. In some circumstances, you may also have grounds for a judicial review; legal aid is available if it is taken by someone on a low income and without assets.

**23/** Contact: Keep Our NHS Public, 19 Vincent Terrace, London N1 8HN  
or e-mail

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