

NHS: THERE ARE LOTS MORE CUTS TO COME

Andy Evans and John Stammers discuss a bright future.



Plans for more big cuts to the NHS are being drawn up. In secret meetings NHS England has carved up (yes again) the NHS into 44 new “footprint” areas. The CCGs, the trusts and local authorities have been told to submit plans for cuts amounting to over £22bn a year. They are called “sustainability and transformation plans”, STPs.

Nothing is out of bounds. Closing doctors' surgeries or holding consultations via the internet, cutting staff and shifting patients out of hospitals, closing hospital wards or whole hospitals or merging neighbouring services. Contracting out more services or charging for services is possible. even likely. And of course the miracle cure of combining social and health care services, as if that will somehow increase their capacity.

Some of these have already been tried here. Andy Evans, CEO of the Great Yarmouth and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group with his Prime Ministerial salary of £140,000+ pa, controls local services – the Trusts, the GPs and ECCH - because he holds the budget and decides (along with an army of staff) what they will be paid for doing what. He can decide what services survive, how many staff they can employ and if they go bust or not. Mostly he has balanced the books by closing and selling off hospitals like a rookie estate agent, closing surgeries, sending patients to private care homes or, of course, seeing them end up in A & E at the James Paget Hospital. He is now getting out, retiring, no doubt with a fat pension.

MORE FUNDS NOT MORE CUTS

The fact is that the NHS is chronically under-funded and under-staffed. Cuts will not and cannot help. Patients still need to be treated and there are increasing numbers of them. Making them travel more miles to a bigger surgery or tens of miles to a surviving hospital will make care worse.

Too few nurses or carers to visit people at home will make care even worse than it is now. The NHS needs a lot more money. The country is very rich and those that hold most of that wealth and command most of that income should be taxed to fund the NHS. Corporations should be taxed to fund the NHS. We don't need nuclear weapons or nuclear power stations. They should be cut, not the NHS.

When the junior doctors went on strike to oppose the imposition of a contract which would stretch them beyond breaking point they were defending the NHS. Now another doctor's surgery has been closed in Lowestoft and the CCG wants to close the Minor Injuries Unit in Beccles Hospital.

The junior doctors were let down. The Clinical Commissioning Groups were supposed to be run by clinicians. They aren't; they are run by bureaucrats like Andy Evans while the clinicians get on with their jobs, but effectively close their eyes. It isn't good enough.

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

- Support LCAC by joining our leafleting every Saturday, 11-1pm, in the town centre precinct, outside the Britten Centre.
- Join our email list - keep up to date with activity in your area.
- Forward this leaflet and pass it onto friends and workmates.
- Want to know more? We can supply a speaker for your group or trade union branch.

Contact us

info@lowestoftagainstthecuts.org.uk
01502 569174 / 568684 / 574010



NO CONSULTATION ON WESTWOOD SURGERY CLOSURE

The surgery on Westwood Avenue which has served the Whitten Estate and the Broadwaters Road area for twenty years is being closed. East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH), a public enterprise body funded by the NHS which has been providing GP services there, has sited concerns about the building as the reason.

The previous GP, Dr Fergal O'Driscoll, who still owns the building, has expressed shock at the sudden decision when discussions to resolve relatively minor issues were ongoing. ECCH has also failed to pay any rent, surely grounds for ECCH itself to be stripped of the contract.

Over 2000 patients of the practice are no doubt also shocked. A convenient, local and well-regarded GP surgery will be closed without notice or regard for the patients. It serves an area which includes many families with young children and vulnerable elderly patients. They are to be transferred to a surgery over a mile away on the other side of the busy A12 relief road in Kirkley Mill, the health centre built to replace Lowestoft Hospital. An expert lawyer commented on a surgery closure in Devon. He told *GPonline* “there should be consultation any time required services are withdrawn, whatever the contract type”. In fact, under the 2006 act, NHS England is required to involve the public in commissioning services. There has been no consultation, no involvement.

NOT THE FIRST; NOT THE LAST

When two Lowestoft surgeries were closed after Care Quality Commission inspections last year only one was replaced. Victoria Road Surgery took over the Marine Parade Surgery, based in Kirkley Mill. Patients' representative, Terry Rymer, wanted the Oulton Medical Centre



retained: “If another doctors' practice bought it or ran it, that would be ideal. It's all there and ready and there are homes developments going around it.” It remains closed and for sale. The local NHS body which holds the

money and commissions services, Great Yarmouth and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), has made it clear that the late Oulton Broad Medical Centre will not reopen as a surgery. There will be even fewer GP surgeries in future if this government gets its way.

The Great Yarmouth and Waveney CCG has a long list of closures to its name. It closed Lowestoft Hospital against widespread opposition followed by Southwold Hospital, Halesworth's Patrick Stead Hospital and Greyfriars Medical Centre in Yarmouth. It intends to close the Minor Injuries Unit in Beccles Hospital. In addition Carlton Court Hospital in Carlton Colville, an almost new purpose built facility for patients with mental health conditions, has been closed for adult patients.

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