

THE AUTUMN STATEMENT



Chancellor Philip Hammond

Norwich South MP Clive Lewis

After the previous chancellor's policies of balancing the books were ditched and Teresa May's vow to save the JAMS, the 9 million people who are "just about managing", apparently forgotten, new Chancellor Philip Hammond hasn't done much. The Tories appeal to workers amounted to banning some up front fees for tenants, raising the National Living Wage for over 25s and slightly slowing the planned welfare cuts of £12bn. Austerity will carry on endlessly.

Measures to address inadequate infrastructure and housing are woefully weak. "Affordable housing" (which is usually unaffordable) schemes are unclear and no substitute for what is needed – large scale council house building. An investment fund for smaller local projects could produce what is needed locally, a 30 minute train journey to Norwich and 45 minute one to Ipswich, but it won't. We will still get nuclear weapons, vast spending on unproven nuclear power projects, and spend and hope projects like the third Heathrow runway and HS2, which is more likely to harm the north than help it. And probably more wars. Yet he managed to maintain another cut to corporation tax. That is the way post-Brexit Britain is going.

WHAT THE CHANCELLOR DIDN'T MENTION

What the chancellor didn't mention was that the decimation of the NHS will carry on. He didn't mention that the cuts to the funding of local authorities will carry on regardless of the collapse of social care it is causing. He didn't mention that the underfunding of education will become chronic so that skills of every kind will continue to decline. He didn't mention that those already poor will suffer most and that inequality between the top few per cent

and the rest will continue to deepen. And it is that which is likely to bring the sorry mess to an end.

THE NHS IN THE REAL WORLD

The government has become impatient that local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) haven't cut the NHS quickly enough. New amalgamations of the leaders of Trusts, the CCGs and local authorities (15 bodies in all) have been told to take over and cut, or, as the government puts it, transform £160m out of the budgets of Norfolk and Waveney.

The logic, if there is any, is to get people to become healthier, to replace hospital with "out of hospital" treatment and more integrated social care, to amalgamate services and close others. But nothing is ruled out.

In reality these plans (the STPs) have been hurriedly cobbled together by a few bureaucrats who will do anything they are told and still try to hoodwink us into thinking that cuts are improvements. Norwich South MP Clive Lewis has aptly called the local plans as being from 'Alice in Wonderland'. It will cause chaos in a service already near the point of collapse. Privatisation, the Tories hidden agenda, continues to advance.

We have said it before. Tax the rich and the corporations, fund the NHS and bring in improvements in a measured way to improve the service.

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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