

Press Release – Stroud Against the Cuts – 15/10/12 – for immediate release

Gloucestershire’s Community Hospitals to stay in NHS –outsourcing decision reversed

Today Gloucestershire NHS campaigners were celebrating victory as Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust

announced that the county’s 8 community hospitals and health services (including 3000 nurses and other health

workers[1]) *would* remain in the NHS – reversing an earlier decision to outsource services, in what would have been

the largest such transfer in the country. The board of NHS Gloucestershire voted today to create a new standalone

NHS Trust [2], and to reject the option of opening health services up to private sector bids. Locally this means staff

and hospitals will remain wholly part of the NHS. At a time when many NHS Community health services elsewhere in

the country are being tendered and taken over by private companies like Virgin and Serco [3, 4], and when concern

about the consequences of the recent NHS Act is increasing at the highest levels [5], it is also a

decision with

significant national implications, and the first decision of its kind.

The decision follows a hard-fought 18 month campaign by anti-cuts campaigners across the county, including a

High Court challenge against the Primary Care Trust's outsourcing plans by 76 year old Michael Lloyd of Stroud,

who argued that NHS options for services had not properly been considered. Lawyers acting for Mr Lloyd obtained

a court order in February 2012 [6] halting the proposed outsourcing and requiring NHS Gloucestershire to go back

to the drawing board and properly consider NHS options. In May, health ministers conceded [7] and the PCT

accepted [8] what campaigners had always argued - that creating an NHS Trust was an option, and that there was

no legal requirement on local health bosses to put services up for tender. The court order had also required NHS

Gloucestershire to consult staff and the public – consultations which resulted in 91% of staff, and 96% of the public

voting for the services to be run by an NHS Trust [9].

Michael Lloyd, a retired railway-man from Stroud, said “I am delighted by today’s decision. I can remember what

life was like before the NHS existed, and we cannot allow a return to the fear and poverty that ill health brought in

those days, and indeed still brings in the American market-based system. Our NHS is too precious to be handed

over to anyone on a political whim, nor should it have to compete against private providers, who are only interested

in maximising their profits. The public, and the staff who provide my healthcare, should have been consulted in the

first place, so I’m very pleased that our voices have been listened to at last.”

Caroline Molloy of Stroud Against the Cuts said “This is a triumph for people power, and the outcome we’ve worked

for from the start. We would like to pay tribute to the tens of thousands of people across Gloucestershire who have

contributed to this victory for our NHS, whether by marching, filling in consultations and

petitions, attending

meetings, contributing financially, or helping the campaign in countless other ways. We also owe a huge debt to the

brave members of staff and trade unionists who spoke out, to the national campaigners like Keep Our NHS Public

who have supported us, to the legal services commission who made the court case possible through legal aid

funding, and most of all to Mr Lloyd, without whom, all these NHS staff and local hospitals would have already left

the NHS. We were told over and over that there was no alternative to outsourcing our hospitals – but today we've

proved that to be false. We've also shown that despite statements to the contrary, competitive tendering out of the

NHS *isn't* compulsory, and that local health bosses retain discretion to keep all services in house .”

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Claude Mickleson of Forest against the Cuts added “We know that the NHS still faces wider threats, both locally and

nationally, with widespread attempts to privatise, cuts staff numbers and to lower pay. We will need to be vigilant –

but we will be better able to resist future attacks now that we have won this battle. We hope today's outcome makes

everyone – including the Clinical Commissioning Group who will soon take over decision making in Gloucestershire -

realise that when the principles of a free, publicly owned NHS are under attack, people can and will stand up protect it.”

ENDS

For more info please contact Caroline Molloy 07931 302507

Notes for Editors

[1] The services affected are eight community hospitals (Stroud, Cirencester, Dilke, Fairford, Lydney, Moreton,

Tewkesbury, and the new Vale Hospital in Dursley) and nine health clinics (Beeches Green Stroud, Stonehouse

Health Clinic, Cinderford Health Centre, Coleford Health Centre, Lydney Health Centre, Hesters Way Healthy Living

Centre, Holts Health Centre Newent, Lydbrook Health Centre, Symn Lane Clinic), as well as District Nursing, Health

Visiting, Podiatry.

[2]As the Health & Social Care Act 2012 abolished Primary Care Trusts with effect from April 2013, the PCT's

'provider arms', ie community services, have had to find new homes. In most of the country these services have

been housed in other NHS Trusts, but across the South West there was a widespread move to outsource to

non-NHS providers, a move that started under the 'Transforming Community Services' programme introduced by

the last government.

[3] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/features/9193015/Healthy-competition-in-the-NHS-is-a-sick-joke.html>

[4] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-suffolk-19786652>

[5] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/oct/13/david-nicholson-fears-nhs-reforms>

[6] <http://www.nhsglos.nhs.uk/2012/10/nhs-gloucestershire-nhs-swinton-board-papers-for-october-15th-2012/> see appendix 2 for court order

[7] http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/exchanges_between_doh_and_glouce in particular, see second letter from Department of Health to Geoffrey Cliften Brown MP (attachment 701443), dated 21st

May. There had been earlier misunderstanding about the need for tendering in some quarters, see for example:

http://www.stroudnewsandjournal.co.uk/news/9655101.Stroud_MP_Neil_Carmichael_refuses_to_join_Keep_NHS_public_campaign/

[8] See for example <http://keepglosnhspublic.posterous.com/communication-from-the-board-of-nhs-glouceste> letter from Jan Stubbings dated 16 May (scroll down)

[9] <http://www.nhsglos.nhs.uk/2012/10/nhs-gloucestershire-nhs-swindon-board-papers-for-october-15th-2012/> appendix 3 (staff consultation results), app.x 5 (public consultation results)