



ACTIVISTS' BRIEFING ON NHS WHITE PAPER DON'T DESTROY OUR NHS!

Unite believes the government's White Paper 'Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS' is a fundamental and very serious attack that puts the future of the NHS in jeopardy. We now face our biggest challenge yet in stopping the break-up and sell off of our NHS. Join our campaign and send the message loud and clear to the government – Don't destroy our NHS!

There is growing opposition against these plans from health care professionals, patient groups, think tanks, trade unions and social justice campaigners. Unite is committed to fighting these proposals every step of the way.

THE WHITE PAPER INEQUITY AND WORSE SERVICES: DESTROYING THE NHS ACCELERATING PRIVATISATION

The ConDem government's proposals are for a tsunami of privatisation that will sweep away our NHS.

Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities will go. Instead, groups of GPs will be handed the NHS budget to contract healthcare services for their patients from "any willing provider". This is shorthand for being able to contract services from the private sector.

The government wants the biggest social enterprise business sector in the world – i.e. as many NHS services as possible will be privatised and turned into 'social enterprise' businesses. All organisations such as Mental Health Trusts, Ambulance Trusts and hospitals will have to become Foundation Trusts and compete for business against other service providers.

It is likely that many groups of GPs will not have the time or expertise to deal with: the assessment of what local health services are needed, contract negotiations with different companies who want to provide those services, the invoicing and billing as companies are paid for services, and resolving problems with contracted companies.

This 'commissioning' function is likely to be contracted out to a private management or health company such as McKinsey, Bupa and others who have previously been contracted by PCTs to help with 'commissioning'.

Already the proposals have been supported by the private sector. The business development director at the private multi-national health company Tribal has said the proposals "could lead to the denationalisation of healthcare services in England".

The government is even contracting out overseeing healthcare services to another organisation: the 'NHS Commissioning Board'.

The interests of private companies will be looked after by 'Monitor' an organisation which will make sure that competition law is applied to ensure all the different companies wanting to make money from delivering healthcare services have 'fair' access to taking over services that are now with the NHS.

Money that should be invested in services will be siphoned off into profits for private companies.

CUTS AND 'EFFICIENCY SAVINGS'

The government has promised to increase NHS funding in real terms in England over the coming few years, though the yearly increases will be less than in recent years. But the reality is that NHS services and staff are going to be tightly squeezed over the next few years. The NHS has been charged with finding £20 billion 'efficiency savings' from now until 2014/15. At a local level we are already seeing job losses and the deletion of staff posts.

The White Paper claims that management costs will be reduced by 45% between now and 2014/15. Yet we know that 'GP commissioning' model creates the need for a plethora of people simply to negotiate and manage contracts.

Unite has many members who have a 'clinical management' role and there is a fear that these roles will fall victim to the driving down of management costs. We are also concerned that administrative, ICT and other support staff without whom healthcare services could not function are being unfairly targeted for cuts – all staff are 'frontline staff'.

It should also be noted that during this time demographic changes, technological advances and the impact of the government's deeply regressive budget on people's living standards will all put the NHS under much greater strain.

ATTACKS ON COLLECTIVE, NATIONAL BARGAINING

Ultimately, the quality of a service such as healthcare depends upon the experiences and encounters which patients and service users have with staff. As costs are driven down by companies wanting to win contracts and maximise profits it is likely they will try and erode the number of staff, and the pay, terms and conditions of staff and the resources available to those staff to deliver healthcare. This will have a detrimental impact on the ability to recruit and retain staff and the quality of services delivered.

The break-up of the NHS into a myriad of competing businesses will be a splintering of the national Agenda for Change agreement. The White Paper clearly states the government's support for "individual employers...to determine pay for their own staff". The proposals in the White Paper seek to remove the limits currently Foundation Trusts have on their ability to vary staff terms and conditions.

Trade unions will also have to seek individual recognition with the hundreds of new businesses the NHS will be broken into.

Defending national agreements such as 'Agenda for Change' is not simply a matter of 'vested interest' – it puts trade union's in the

best possible position to argue for fair pay, terms and condition for staff and action on issues such as opposing spending cuts, increases in workload, tackling violence at work and achieving equality for all. All of this work makes a positive difference to the quality of healthcare services.

WHAT WILL THE IMPACT BE?

The accumulative impact of the government's proposals will be to dismantle and sell off our NHS – it will exist only as a logo. We know that privatisation and competition makes delivering a service much more expensive and worse quality. When a service is publicly owned it doesn't have to maximise its profit by driving down costs and cutting corners. People working in different services can cooperate and share best practice – when you are in competition sharing best practice means losing your competitive edge over your rivals, and possibly losing your contract and income.

No area of the NHS is immune to the government's dangerous proposals.

Join our campaign and send the message loud and clear -
Don't Destroy our NHS

Please take one minute to send a letter or an email to your MP, telling them why you are opposed to the White Paper and why they should be too as these changes will mean:

- More wasteful bureaucracy – not less
- Less money for treating patients
- More money into the profits of private healthcare companies
- More inequity of a postcode lottery on healthcare services

Just visit www.writetothem.com – you can send an email directly from this link using the bullet points above.

Unite 4 our NHS: Don't destroy our NHS!

Unite nationally are leading a political campaign against the destruction of our NHS and in favour of the type of NHS our members want – an integrated, comprehensive, universal, publicly owned and accountable NHS free for all.

But that campaign will be hollow if we are not also having the fight on the ground at a local level to keep NHS services.

To help build strong local campaigns - fighting for that goal, Unite have produced a range of resources to help local representatives and members – you can download them from www.unitetheunion.org/unite4ournhs.

Contact your Regional Officer if you need further advice about starting a campaign in your workplace.



www.unitetheunion.org/unite4ournhs