



Keep Our NHS Public Merseyside
c/o News for Nowhere
96 Bold Street
Liverpool L1 4HY
(Postal Address Only)
email: KeepOurNHSPublicMerseyside@yahoo.com

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For Immediate Release

Liverpool PCT broke procedure in handing GP surgeries to private firm

Health campaigners have accused Liverpool PCT of failing to consult the public and demanded the decision to transfer surgeries to SSP Health, a private company owned by two Wigan GPs, be reversed.

"There will certainly be changes to the service, but the public were never consulted," says Keep Our NHS Public campaigner Sam Semoff, a patient at one of the affected practices. "The PCT broke its own procedure. They must reverse the decision and begin the process again, consulting the public before inviting any tenders."

Two weeks ago, the Liverpool Echo reported that 20 GP surgeries in Liverpool and Sefton would be transferred to SSP Health. Ten of these are Liverpool practices whose staff, including GPs, are directly employed by Liverpool Community Health, an NHS Trust.

The Office of Fair Trading has invited written submissions by Wednesday 5 December on whether the transfer, now said to involve 22 surgeries, may contravene the Enterprise Act 2002.

An investigation by Keep Our NHS Public found that a principal shareholder in the Wigan firm is also a director of 20 active companies including property and private medicine. The campaign also discovered a link to Capita, suggesting that SSP Health's takeover of surgeries may strengthen Capita's influence on what health services are commissioned in future.

Responding to a Freedom of Information request in Sept 2011, Liverpool PCT told Semoff that there would be no consultation with the public as "as there is no material change

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Liverpool PCT.....2222222222

specified in the tender for the services currently provided."

However, in January this year, the tender was aborted by the PCT and the specifications were changed so that work previously carried out by Practice Nurses would be done by GPs. This material change to the service required public consultation and also affected the financial basis of the tender.

Liverpool Community Health withdrew from bidding in June and told the Liverpool Daily Post at the time that removing practice nurses "means the quality of care to patients would diminish" and the moves were simply "unsafe".

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Contact Numbers for further information:

Sam Semoff – [tel #s]

Notes to Editors

1. The decision to award the tender for 20 surgeries to SSP Health was reported by The Liverpool Echo on 22 Nov:
<http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/liverpool-news/local-news/2012/11/22/20-gp-practices-in-liverpool-and-sefton-to-be-taken-over-by-private-health-firm-100252-32282024/>
2. The Office of Fair Trading "invitation to comment" refers to 22 surgeries. It appeared on 21 November with deadline for written submissions 5 December:
http://www.offt.gov.uk/OFTwork/mergers/Mergers_Cases/2012/SSPHealth
3. The Liverpool GP practices whose staff are directly employed by Liverpool Community Health are:
The Fiveways Centre, Childwall; Kensington Park Practice, Jubilee Drive; Netherley Health Centre; Park View Medical Centre, Orphan Drive; Princes Park Health Centre; Stanley Medical Centre; South Liverpool NHS Treatment Centre; West Speke Health Centre; Everton Road Health Centre; Marybone Health Centre
4. The decision to abort the tendering process was reported by GP Online in January 2012:
<http://www.gponline.com/News/article/1114092/Exclusive-GPs-demand-PCT-compensation-aborted-bid-process/>
5. The decision by Liverpool Community Health to withdraw from bidding under the new specifications was reported by the Liverpool Daily Post on 28 June 2012
<http://www.liverpooldailypost.co.uk/liverpool-news/regional-news/2012/06/28/private-companies-are-set-to-step-forward-to-run-10-liverpool-gp-practices-99623-31275755/>

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6. On 13 September 2011 Liverpool PCT wrote to Sam Semoff in response to a Freedom of Information request. Their letter, available on request, includes answers (italicised) on patients rights and consultation:

6) Please supply all evidence, which LPCT considered before the decision to invite bids, that the tendering process for PCTMS practices would protect and promote the right of patients to make choices with respect to treatment.

No specific evidence was considered due to no change to patient's rights in the tender process.

7) What consultation with patients at PCTMS practices concerning possible tendering was undertaken before the decision to invite expressions of interest from health care providers?

None as there is no material change specified in the tender for the services currently provided.

8) What requirements are there to consult patients of the PCTMS practices during the tendering process? What plans do LPCT have to hold such consultations for patients of each practice?

There are no requirements as there is no material change specified in the tender for the services currently provided. There are no plans to hold such consultations.

7. The website www.duedil.com which compiles information from Companies House, shows that SSP Health Ltd is Company No. 06359596, with two shareholders, the husband and wife team of Wigan GPs Shikha Pitalia (51%) and Sanjay Pitalia (49%). Sanjay Pitalia is director of 25 companies, of which 20 are trading, including Pall Mall Medical and several property companies.

The SSP Health Information Pack shows the Medical Director is Dr Balwinder Duper:

<http://www.ssphealth.com/jobs/SSP%20Health%20Information%20Pack.pdf>

Dr Duper is quoted on the front page of a Capita report on Risk Stratification:

<http://www.capitaconsulting.co.uk/Downloads%20Capita%20Consulting/Risk%20stratification%20and%20predicitve%20modelling%20service.pdf>

Capita took over Health consultancy work from Tribal Consulting in 2011 with the aim "to provide support services to GP commissioning consortia":

<http://www.capita.co.uk/investors/Pages/rns-investor-news.aspx?id=1802>

Tribal Consulting carried out a 3 year project with Ashton, Leigh & Wigan PCT including Risk Stratification, under the Framework for External Support for Commissioning:

http://www.alwpct.nhs.uk/images/uploads/TransformingCommissioningSavingLivesYearOne_1.pdf