

Oxon Keep Our NHS Public

<http://keepournhspublicoxfordshire.org.uk/>

press release

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Oxon NHS Campaigners join rally to back NHS Judicial Review legal challenge

Oxfordshire NHS campaigners joined almost 100 NHS Defenders from across the country at a rally outside Leeds High Court on Tuesday 24 April to show their support for a legal challenge to a contentious new form of NHS contract.

This Accountable Care Organisation contract is designed to 'manage demand' - which basically means restricting and denying health care to patients. This would undermine the core principle that the NHS provides comprehensive healthcare to everyone who has a clinical need for it.

Banners, ribbons and placards splashed colour across the dull precinct outside the court buildings as speakers from across the country reported the effects to patients of severe cuts and changes to the NHS in their region, leading to hospital and GP closures, restricted access to care and threats to patient safety.

999mCall for the NHS chair, Joanne Land, who is a student at Ruskin College, Oxford, said:

It was an important day and we were delighted so many campaigners attended. Local campaigns are uniting now because they realise that what is happening to their local hospitals and services is all due to the bigger national picture.

Bill MacKeith, secretary of Oxon Keep Our NHS Public, who also addressed the rally, said:

We have no truck with the 2012 Health & Social Care Act, - the current legislation that determines how NHS services are contracted and paid for. But the government has to abide by it or change it through Parliament. The government and its quangos can't pick and choose which bits of law they follow and find ways to avoid the bits they don't - that is not democracy.

The day in court focused on technical points of law that determine what the NHS can and can't do. There was an alarming indication that if the new Contract goes ahead its cost cutting nature would not only restrict patients' access to healthcare services, it would also lead to a postcode lottery.

NHS England's barrister defended the new contract on the grounds that its cost cutting nature would create a competitive advantage for Accountable Care Organisations that created new, efficient, cheaper forms of treatment. But surely in a National Health Service, any beneficial innovation should be shared everywhere - not used to give a competitive advantage to one local or regional ACO?

The judge reserved judgement, as expected, but told the court that he would be as quick as possible as he recognised the importance of the case.

Photo credit: Neil Terry Photography.

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