

## **Oxfordshire KONP condemns 'partnership deal' between OUHT and the private firm, InHealth.**

The recent announcement of the signature of a 'partnership agreement' between InHealth, NHS England and Oxford University Hospitals Trust has been hailed by by some as a victory. Oxfordshire KONP has a different view. See the letter to local councillors, below.

60 Great Clarendon St  
Oxford OX2 6AX

13 September 2019

To: The Chair and Members of Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee

Dear Councillor,

PET scanners

We have heard that a 'partnership agreement' has been signed between InHealth, NHS England and Oxford University Hospitals Trust. This is directly counter to the recommendation of Oxfordshire's Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny's that the matter be referred to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel.

Furthermore, none of the concerns about mobile scanners raised in a letter from three Oxfordshire MPs to the Secretary of State for Health in July have been addressed.

It was clear weeks ago that - following massive public concern - the Oxford Churchill Hospital PET scanner service would continue to be run by the NHS on that site. It was a victory to have kept InHealth out of our local cancer scanning service. service. It still is, but nothing has improved since then.

There was concern this would be via a subcontract whereby InHealth contracted the Oxford Hospitals Trust to continue to run PET scanners at that site. If there is now to be a direct PET scanners contract between NHS England and the Oxford Hospitals Trust - as reported by the Banbury Guardian - that is good. But we are still seeking clarification on that point.

However:

- \* Mobile scanners continue to be inferior to the OUH scanner set-up. This is what the clinicians had said.

People outside Oxon - in Reading, Swindon and Milton Keynes - will receive an inferior (mobile scanners) service.

- \* The mobile scanners in those locations will be provided and run by a private company, InHealth. This is part of a carve-up of contracts for PET scanners across the country between InHealth and Alliance Medical. Such privatisation is in conflict with the 'no privatisation of the NHS on my watch' professions of the Minister of Health.

- \* Clinicians have voiced grave concerns about communication between out-of-Oxon InHealth doctors and radiologists and NHS NHS doctors and radiologists at the Churchill Hospital. We do not believe these have been resolved. 'Cancer pathways' for individual patients will not be managed by a single integrated team but will be divided between InHealth and NHS employees, including booking I appointments via a call service. This will be detrimental to the health of patients outside Oxfordshire.

- \* It may also be detrimental to patients in Oxfordshire, as our Churchill cancer diagnostics and treatment service becomes frustrated and clogged up with problems deriving from the InHealth sector.

- \* The introduction of more mobile scanners is in breach of the consensus view of clinicians in the NHS that scanners should in future be fixed-site, a view promoted by NHS England itself.

- \* For Reading, Swindon and Milton Keynes, this remains a top-down privatisation, the imposition of an inferior service in breach of NHS England's own stated policies.

- \* Oxon HOSC was not consulted by OUHT or NHS England before the award of 'preferred bidder' status to InHealth, as it should have been.

- \* The procurement process and decision to make InHealth 'preferred bidder' for the Thames Valley contract did not have the confidence of clinicians and political representatives. We called for those people responsible for the procurement process in NHS England to resign and will continue to do so.

- \* Clinicians were threatened by NHS England lawyers with legal action if they spoke out in public about their concerns if privatisation went ahead. This is shocking and HOSC should demand that it is never repeated.

- \* Oxford University Hospitals Trust has not correctly dealt with Freedom of Information Act requests from the Banbury Guardian, either in terms of the content of what has

been released or in terms of adhering to the correct time limits for answering. Some requests are still outstanding. HOSC should require better performance on this from OUHT on being open to public scrutiny.

The PET scanners episode is far from over. In future, there will be the issue of a private company providing fixed-site scanners in Milton Keynes, Reading and Swindon to contend with. And there is no guarantee that private companies will not come back looking for the scanning service at the Churchill Hospital.

We ask the HOSC:

- 1 to contact its counterparts in the other three local authorities concerned with a view to coordinating work in support of publicly provided health services; and
2. to require from NHS England a detailed clinician-led performance review report on a regular basis, at least six-monthly, against which progress on the points raised above can be measured. We believe it is the responsibility of the HOSC on behalf of the people of Oxfordshire to do so.

With best wishes,

Bill MacKeith

secretary, Oxon KONP