



## SOUTHWARK BRANCH

### BRIEFING NOTE FOR SCRUTINY COUNCILLORS

#### Context

We are grateful for the opportunity to join your meeting and present a further paper as we believe this and the JHOSC have vital roles in scrutinising a wide range of developments – as referred to in our previous briefing paper – which we believe undermine the NHS as a public service by promoting privatisation and marketization. In this paper we have chosen to focus on 3 developments (Test and Trace, the White Paper on Health and Social Care, management of GP services) which we believe warrant close scrutiny and demand a response from you and the Council to the appropriate places ( e.g, Central Government, NHS England and NHS London, South East London CCG).

#### Test and Trace: Covid 19

We think this is the time for the Council to be pressing for the finance allocated by Central Government for Find, Test, Trace, Isolate (an important mouthful!) to be allocated to local public health system and GP practises rather than private companies. The local agencies mentioned should, in our view, be at the cornerstone of this work and money given to Serco be diverted to them. Lambeth and Hammersmith and Fulham Councils have taken on this work but without getting the financial support. To be clear the extra money being referred to for this should be over and above what is given to LAs who *assist* the national system. This is about taking it over entirely so needs even more. The crux of this issue is the *support* for people to self- isolate if positive or if a contact of someone positive. Otherwise the massive amounts spent on testing is wasted.

#### AT Medics

Hopefully members are aware that 4 GP surgeries in Southwark (Falmouth Road, Lister Health Centre, Queens Road and Silverlock) are now being run by a subsidiary (Operose) of a US corporation Centene. There are over 40 practises affected in 19 boroughs around London and nationwide over 370,000 patients are involved. This is a graphic example of the increasing marketization and privatisation of the NHS and also something else that has been done whilst attention is focussed on Covid 19. This change has been made with no public discussion or information, including for patients affected. The assertion that services to patients will not be affected and that there is no need to inform, fails to take account of concerns about accountability, transparency and a greater emphasis on profit. The implications on quality of care,

terms and conditions of staff and the prospect of closure of practices deemed to be unprofitable are very worrying.

## **Health and Social Care White Paper**

We reported to the last meeting our fears that privatisation will continue and grow if the current proposals for ICS bodies embodied in the Health and Social Care White Paper published last year and 'consulted' on by Government between end November and early January proceed into law. This will lead to changes in procurement procedures, the abolition of a local authority's right to refer unpopular decisions and bundling social care into the health service whilst we believe it needs separate legislation. On procurement, although the necessity to compete has gone, this does not mean less privatisation but rather that more tenders are awarded directly and without the protection of standards afforded by the Public Contract Regulations.

## **Conclusion**

Here are some links which provide further information on the matters raised briefly above. We in Southwark KONP are very keen to work with councillors at raising issues and campaigning to both reverse and prevent the damage being done to the NHS.

- Covid 19: <https://www.peoplescovidinquiry.com/>
- Integrated Care Systems: <https://keepournhspublic.com/campaigns/legislative-changes/integrated-care/>. See also attached letter being sent to councillors and MPs
- Social Care: <https://keepournhspublic.com/campaigns/social-care-campaign/>
- AT Medics takeover: <https://www.london-se1.co.uk/news/view/10487>. See attached letter to Secretary of State. Also a campaign pack is being prepared.
- Privatisation: <https://keepournhspublic.com/campaigns/stop-privatisation-of-the-nhs/>

Southwark KONP

March 2021