**PRESS RELEASE FOR MONITOR**

The Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign met last week with key managers in Monitor, a large NHS quango which sets the rules for privatising the NHS. We were pleased that Monitor met us and answered our questions.

But what they said was worrying.

Many of you will be aware that The Save Lewisham Hospital has been supporting people over the last few months in writing letters to Monitor and we handed 2000 of those letters to Monitor a couple of weeks ago with many more signed during Eid and People’s Day. Those who signed say that they think privatising parts of the NHS is not in their personal interests and not good for the NHS either.

Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign has been concerned about the wider forces in the NHS that gave rise to the threats to the hospital. One of these forces is competition and privatisation which is now in the DNA of the NHS, run and organised by Monitor.

Privatisation means that parts of the NHS can get sold off to the private sector – companies like Virgin or G4S. Private companies take NHS profits for their shareholders. They often cut corners by paying less to staff and can deliver worse services. Plus, the whole process of tendering and privatisation costs time and money – money for private companies and time for the NHS.

* Monitor told us that there is little evidence that the whole process of competition has any benefit for patients and their health.
* Monitor told us that they do not know the costs of the process of competition and privatisation to the NHS.
* They also told us that the Guidance they have developed for the NHS seems often to be misunderstood by Clinical Commissioning Groups who are meant to use it. So Monitor needs to guide them through the Guidance.
* Monitor gave no indication that it was going to change its official guidance on the issue, although they invited the Campaign to write with suggestions. Rather than changing the guidance, which they admit to be confusing, they offer “road shows” to engage with CCGs around the country and give them guidance on their guidance!
* Monitor told us that CCGs that don’t want to tender for a service should contact them - but admitted that they may well be advised that they have no choice.
* Monitor representatives, while listening carefully to the arguments, did not agree that their advice led to automatic tendering and did think that there were advantages in competition to provide services. Clearly there are still many letters to write to show that thousands of people disagree with them.   
    
  Once again Lewisham people are leading the way. The campaign is continuing to distribute the letters and expect that an increasing proportion of the population will be eager to sign. We hope that this approach will spread to other campaigns and areas of the country and to support CCGs who want to proceed without tendering. See <http://www.savelewishamhospital.com/letters-to-monitor/> for more information.

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