

Wandsworth Health News

January

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St George's tries to save crumbs while giving away the loaf

St George's lack lustre leadership have turned their back on making any real savings at the hospital and instead, at the government's behest, have turned their attention to scapegoat those who don't pay for their NHS treatment.

This small minority consists of wealthier patients whose insurance company coughed up for private treatment at the hospital. Some from abroad, who may be wealthy or not, who receive treatment and then don't pay. Some from the UK who live here but are not entitled to treatment.

The hospital trust board estimates that about £5m per year is lost by treating patients that are not entitled to NHS treatment.

No little amount-but this figure is insignificant compared to the amount of public money wasted on the Private Finance Initiative Scheme that was responsible for the building of the Atkinson Morley wing.

PFI Rip-Off

A group of private companies agreed to build the new wing and it was completed in 2003. It cost £45m to build.

Under the PFI scheme the hospital, ie the tax payers, have to pay back to this consortium of private companies an annual, for want of a better word, rent.

So far we have paid over £120m in rent to the consortium-three times the cost of the building.

But that is not the end of it.

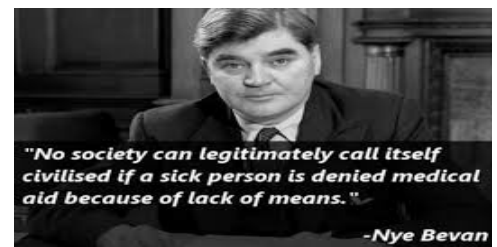
The hospital must continue paying until 2033. At the moment the rent is £10m a year-twice the amount lost to those who fail to pay for their treatment.

By the end of the PFI contract the annual rent will be 50% higher at almost £15m a year.

In total over the 30 years of the contract St George's will have paid the consortium almost £320m for a £45m building.

Not a bad little earner.

If St George's really want to save money then tackle the obscenity of the Atkinson Morley PFI contract



Obstetrics - women targeted for government trial

As so often happens women are to be targeted to save money in the new hare brain scheme referred to overleaf .

St George's is one of 20 hospitals chosen by the government for a pilot scheme in obstetrics, and one other elective service.

Although the Trust Board announced that there were no 'resources implication' associated with the proposal- this claim seems rather dubious.

In the January Board papers we are informed that an 'interim project manager will be appointed to implement the scheme'. Unless he or she is working for nothing that money must come out of patient care.

The way the scheme is to be implemented has already come in for criticism from local doctors

Every woman that attends the obstetric clinic at St George's will be expected to produce two forms of identification.



One to establish her identity and the other to verify proof of residence.

The Trust Board, presumably on the guidance of the Home Office, have stated that a 'photo id' will be the best proof of identity.

How many women have photo ids ? Not many.

Proof of residence will be an even bigger bone of contention.

Most utility bills are often in the husband's name, particularly among ethnic minority women.

This has already been pointed out by Wandsworth GPs.

Undeterred the Trust Board has gone ahead and the scheme started this month.

It is likely to prove chaotic. Many women will not have either of the two forms of id required. Many will just turn up without them.

In either event given the extra staff time involved it is doubtful if the scheme will prove cost effective.

Women appear to be the main targets for the Home Office and St George's.

The other elective service to be monitored was not named by the Trust Board.

Whether it has been chosen yet who can say.