

HEALTH EMERGENCY

The Health Watchdog

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Massive cuts planned in NE London health care

Plans to axe over 800 hospital beds across North East London, are contained in a devastating “business plan” published quietly just before Christmas:

- effectively **closing King George’s Hospital** in Ilford with the loss of 444 beds out of 496,
- closing **234 beds** even before they open in the new **Bart’s and London Trust**,
- slashing 146 beds from **Whipps Cross Hospital**,
- and cutting **Homerton Hospital** by 76 beds (15%).

So massive would be the reduction in activity at **King George’s** that its remaining acute services would require just one third of the space it currently occupies, with more than half the site to be mothballed or stripped of services and sold off: the plans include a **£6 million** allocation for redundancies of staff who could not be disposed of through “natural wastage”.

After a week where soaring rates of readmission of patients discharged too early from hospital have been exposed, it is interesting to note that the key assumption in these reduced bed numbers is that NE London hospitals will **discharge patients much more swiftly** than at present.

- **More than a million outpatient appointments** would also be moved out of hospital clinics in NE London to primary care “settings” including polyclinics.
- Hospitals would also face a **3% per year reduction in the “tariff”** that determines how much they get paid for patient care.
- With soaring overheads and income sharply reduced, Trusts would be forced to seek economies by **sacking doctors, nurses and support staff**. The consultation proposal looks to cut up to **37% from nursing costs**, and **up to 43% from spending on doctors**.
- It’s not just hospitals at risk: the business case makes clear that hundreds of millions would also need to be saved by a combination of **“Decommissioning services”** (estimated savings £60m-£150m); **“Shifting acute activity to a lower cost setting”** with (unexplained) estimated savings ranging from £10m to £70m – and **putting a range of primary care, mental health and community services out to tender**, with forecast “potential” savings of **£200m to £550m** “depending on how aggressive the commissioners chose to be”.
- The survival of most hospitals in NE London depends upon achieving a massive **£500m savings target**, the biggest target being a 35% saving on expenditure by the Barking Havering & Redbridge Trust, while **Bart’s & the London is required to generate the largest amount in savings (£211m), equivalent to 32% of its current spending**.

London Health Emergency’s Information Director Dr John Lister, who unearthed these figures tucked away on the Health for NE London website alongside a detail-free Consultation Document said:

“NHS London and local health chiefs claim all these cuts and changes are necessary to keep the NHS afloat, despite the fact that there is no evidence to show that changes on this scale

can be achieved in NE London, or that they will save money on the scale assumed. If they don't save as much as they hoped, these cuts could be just a foretaste of even bigger cutbacks to come, laying waste to the NHS from the East End to the M25.

“These massive cuts in spending can only be achieved through massive cuts in staffing, axing thousands of nurses, doctors and other members of the NHS team in areas where unemployment is already high.

“If this is really the answer, NHS London and Health for NE London are clearly asking the wrong question. We could all live easily with big cuts in management consultants and pointless NHS bureaucracy – but cuts on this scale in frontline services are unacceptable whichever party tries to implement them.”

FURTHER DETAILS: JOHN LISTER 07774 264112,

The pre consultation business case (192 pp) is available at:

<http://www.healthforne1.nhs.uk/resources/publications/?entryid49=25452>