

For Immediate release (8th April 2008)

Press Release from: General Practitioners Committee West Midlands

Government policy for General Practice is ‘absurd’ say senior West Midlands GPs

GP leaders from the West Midlands have condemned government plans to force through commercialisation of general practice, and establishment of types of different GP facilities, without consideration of local needs.

Commenting on Government’s plans to extend general practice to new providers and new types of facilities Dr Grant Ingrams, a GP from Coventry and medical secretary of the BMA’s West Midlands General Practitioners Committee said:

“It seems absurd that after years of starving existing general practice of funds to increase capacity, this government is spending £250million on new practices. It will take years to build and develop these new facilities. Investing the same amount in existing practices would result in improved patient access much sooner, and would be much more cost effective for the tax payer.”

“We have heard of areas where local general practices already have the capacity to expand, but the Primary Care Trust (PCT) is being forced by the NHS to find land for new building in the same area. This demonstrates one of the underlying absurdities of the policy.”

“This government’s policy of commercialisation – offering general practice to big business – will result in a significant proportion siphoned off into the pockets of shareholders. We cannot see how this could ever be in the best interest of patients or the tax payer.”

“Junior Health Minister Lord Darzi in his evidence to the Health Select Committee(2), said that the new Health Centres were optional for PCTs, and Health Secretary Alan Johnson(3) has said that local communities should decide what was needed locally, which may or may not be a large health centre. We are therefore shocked to find that the NHS Operating Framework makes it compulsory for every Primary Care Trust to open a new Darzi Health Centre regardless of local need. We can only conclude that the health ministers are no longer in charge of the NHS.”

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

- 1 The “NHS Next Stage Review Interim Report” (‘Darzi’ review) published October 2007 requires every local health authority (Primary Care Trust), to open a new health

centre. The government is encouraging large private companies to bid to run these health centres. In total the plan is for 150 new health centres and at least 100 new general practices.

- 2 Lord Darzi – Oral Evidence to Health Select Committee 25 October 2007
- 3 Alan Johnson – speech to the NHS Confederation Primary Care Network 5 March 2008

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