

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

March 2021 Newsletter

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TERMINATE THE CONTRACTS!

By the time we had our on-line committee meeting on Monday 22nd February we had read the lead story in the *Islington Tribune* headed: "**Patients in hands of U.S. big business**"

This explained that subsidiaries of the Centene Corporation had "sieved control of a raft of Islington GP surgeries" — Hanley Primary Care Centre in Finsbury Park and the Mitchison Road Surgery off Essex Road in Canonbury. However the "change of control", although authorised in December, was only scrutinised for the first time by elected representatives at a meeting on 18th February when councillors from the five boroughs covered by the North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (NCL CCG) attended its meeting and they attempted to put a halt on the deal.

A written response to a question put at that meeting said that the NCL CCG will be requesting the Chair's action on the final due diligence check on this matter at an urgent decision meeting to be scheduled in the coming week.

Arising from the above, Islington Keep Our NHS Public (KONP) supported by an important number of health professionals and campaigners wrote a letter to Dr. Josephine Sauvage, chair of the NCL CCG requesting confirmation that the contracts will be terminated and a new way forward will be decided.

This was reported and a copy of the letter circulated by Pam Zinkin, member of KONP and our own NHS columnist; after a lengthy discussion, it was agreed that our chair, Bob Collins would send a letter to Dr. Josephine Sauvage reporting our support for the letter. We then sent the letter (in the box) to *Islington Tribune*.

We had no problem taking this action on behalf of IPF members since our group has taken an important and well-known stand in defence of a public National Health Service, taking part in demonstrations at Whittington Hospital and in central London, and speaking at meetings in the Town Hall.

**SEE BACK PAGE FOR A
POSTER WHICH CAN BE
DISPLAYED IN YOUR
WINDOW**

LETTER SENT TO ISLINGTON TRIBUNE

I am sure that readers can imagine the shock and concern of the 500+ members of Islington Pensioners Forum when they heard -- through the columns of this paper -- that our primary care services are in danger of a takeover from US company Centene through its subsidiaries following a disgraceful manoeuvre, i.e. the resignation and replacement of the six previously designated members at AT Medics Limited giving the US company access to our surgeries devoid of public scrutiny.

Our members -- older people living in Islington -- have gone on record over and over again in support of our NHS, and we are appalled that the North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (NCL CCG) could allow such a thing to happen. Disgraceful manoeuvres by private companies with no history or interest in our public NHS is in opposition to the NHS ethos -- commitment to community, openness in all aspects of proposed change and transparency in transactions.

Therefore at our on-line committee meeting on 22nd February, we agreed to support the letter sent to Dr. Josephine Sauvage, chair of the NCL CCG by Islington Keep Our NHS Public and others calling for termination of the contracts. We want the re-establishment of the trust inspired by the NHS, and we believe that the majority of your readers want that too.

Bob Collins,
Chair, Islington Pensioners Forum

The Centene scandal raised in Parliament

Jonathan Ashworth, Shadow Health Minister raised this vital question in Parliament on 24th February:

“In London a week and a half ago, GP services with 375,000 patients were taken over by the US health insurance corporation Centene. There was no patient consultation, there was no public scrutiny. This is arguably a stealth privatisation with huge implications for patient care. Will he step in, halt the transfer, ensure it’s fully scrutinised and prevent takeovers like this ever happening again?”



PLEASE SIGN THE PETITION AT: weownit.org.uk and DISPLAY THE POSTER IN YOUR WINDOW

MESSAGE FROM PAM ZINKIN.

This is such a vital issue for all of us. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Health and Care Minister Matt Hancock have told us time and again in the Brexit discussions that there is no danger of US big business taking over our NHS, but here we have Centene, a giant US insurance corporation involved in a takeover by stealth. We owe it to the founders of our NHS and the younger generations to make a stand. Remember that corporations are in business to make a profit, not to uphold the principles of public service! It is not an over-estimation to say that this is a life and death matter for our NHS. So please sign the petition and ask your friends and family to also do so... and please show solidarity by displaying the poster.

What do you think of this age positive road sign?

Walking sticks and hunched-over figures are familiar ways to visually designate old age — but should they be? This question was the starting point for a competition by the charity Centre for Ageing Better which asked designers to submit “age positive” alternatives.

The winning entry, a submission by London-based SwaG Design, gave the original symbol of the couple crossing the road an energetic spin, with their walking stick becoming a dancing cane.

“Dancing is one of the things that people of all ages love,” said Jon Miller from SwaG Design. “It promotes physical, mental and emotional health as well as a chance to be sociable, expressive and uplifting.”



Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) : Report by Frances Bradley

Residential streets dominated by traffic are not people friendly spaces. People and their wellbeing should be a priority, particularly since 70%+ of Islington residents do not own a car. Increasing traffic volume is one of the reasons Islington Council, along with 31 out of the 33 London boroughs, introduced some experimental Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), also known as People Friendly Streets. The scheme is initially set to last 18 months, with a public consultation after 12 months.

The impact of traffic pollution on health

Drivers' use of SatNav and Google maps has led them to residential streets to avoid traffic congestion; in Islington overall traffic volume has increased 72%, mainly on residential streets where 90% of the population live. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) safe pollution level annual limit is exceeded everywhere in Islington, and the damaging effect on health is evident in the Office of National Statistics (ONS) report showing there are 36,000 pollution-related premature deaths every year in the UK. Pollution also impacts on children's lung development causing the death of even young children with asthma (see picture on page 4). Clearly this increase in traffic on all routes — and particularly residential streets — is both unhealthy and unsustainable for people and the planet.

Global and individual countries' commitments

At the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, 190 countries agreed the need to stop global temperatures rising more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels but actually set a target of not more than 1.5°C warmer. In 2016, 195 countries, including the UK signed up to The Paris Agreement. The scale of the problem the world faces is indicated in the enormous amount of CO2 global human greenhouse gas emissions: in 2020 the estimate is 40 gigatonnes of CO2, where 1 gigatonne=1,000,000,000 tonnes. The Paris Agreement is a huge commitment to reduce these emissions to net zero by 2050.

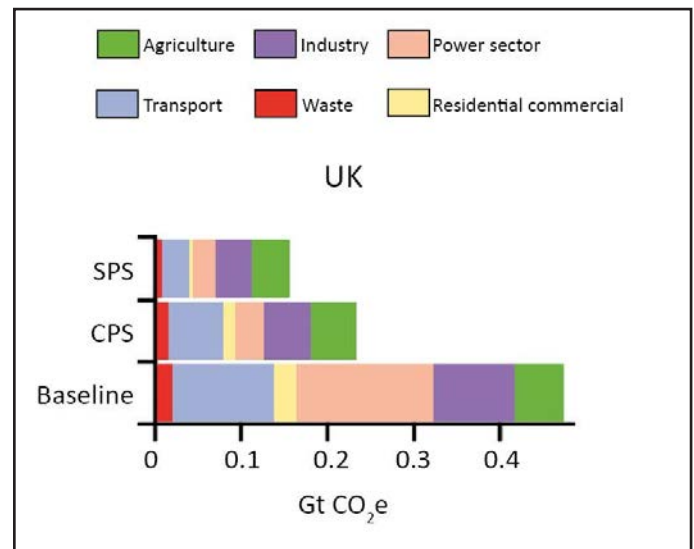
Islington Council Climate Action

Responding to this, Islington Council declared a "Climate Emergency" in 2019 with the ambitious target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. This means man-made carbon not exceeding the amount that can be absorbed by natural features, i.e. "carbon sinks": plants, forests and oceans. This is different from "carbon offsetting" (the response prior to The Paris Agreement)

Offsetting allows emissions to continue unabated in exchange for offsetting activity, such as planting trees. But carbon released into the atmosphere rises year on year, so it is absolutely vital to actively reduce CO2 emissions.

Pollution from Transport

The Lancet (medical journal) published a report in January 2021 on the effects of climate change on health. Each signatory country to The Paris Agreement could decide and monitor their own Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) i.e. their own CO2 reduction targets, policies and actions, reporting back on progress every five years. The UK's central government has devolved responsibility to Local Authorities, and so LTNs in Islington are part of a UK-wide response to the reduction target our government has signed up to.



This chart for the UK is taken from the report and shows the relative size of the contribution different major sectors make to carbon emissions. Pale blue represents transport, and illustrates just how much need - and very importantly, scope - there is for reduction.

The baseline is current CO2 emission levels in gigatonnes. The centre line is estimated emissions by 2040 if we continue on our current pathway (offsetting CO2 emissions).

The top line is estimated emissions by 2040 in a sustainable pathway scenario (carbon neutral).

Public Action

Reducing transport emissions is only part of the answer, but it is an area in which people who currently drive can make a change, for LTNs also encourage and facilitate people to change to "Active Travel" instead of driving. This means: walking, wheeling (wheelchair) and cycling. Physical activity is also great for health and being out and about, encountering more people, strengthens communities, is good for mental health and wellbeing; also local shopping is good for the local economy.

Different Reactions: for/against

Nevertheless, there are differences of opinion expressed on social media and in local papers. Both sides agree that "rat runs" in residential streets is a problem, but Keep Highbury Moving (KHM) believe that local people should not be inconvenienced by

traffic filters which prevent free movement of cars and vans within the borough, forcing traffic onto main roads and making journeys longer. However, local car use constitutes 50% of cars on the road, and local LTN support groups believe the benefits of quiet, less polluted, less dangerous, more people-friendly streets, the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and people becoming more active instead of using their car for local journeys, far outweigh any inconvenience. Emergency vehicles are not subject to the restrictions, and arguably can get to their destination faster if fewer vehicles are using residential roads.

Cycling is safer on quiet streets

Due to the necessity of covid restrictions, the government told local councils, with immediate effect and without prior consultation, to alter street layouts to allow safe social distancing. In London boroughs where LTNs had been introduced before the pandemic and after local consultation, the restrictions have been better understood and more widely accepted by residents. On the other hand, Islington residents living on “rat runs” have been campaigning for traffic restrictions on residential streets for the past 20 years.

Objections to Islington’s LTNs include increasing traffic and pollution on main roads for the 10% of people who have to live on them, thereby worsening the living conditions of poorer people. This is a problem that will only be solved if traffic volume decreases overall as people decide as often as possible not to use their car.

Elders have been cited as disproportionately affected by the road restrictions — much of this based on assumptions by groups opposing the LTNs.

However, a local GP points out that the furthest her patients have to travel to get to her surgery is around 1km, as GP catchment areas in London are very small — and in practice most elders already either walk or use a mobility scooter, so LTNs mean their journey is safer and quieter and the environment is more pleasant. Ironically, the people who drive tend to be young and own large cars.

There is a case for blue badge holders to be exempt from the restrictions. For example, some disabilities mean people find sitting is painful, so increasing the length of a journey can make it an ordeal for someone who has no choice but to get around by car or taxi. There is additional work to be done on this.



Ella Kissi-Debrah, “not born with asthma” but died of this disease, and the coroner concluded that “air pollution” should be added to her death certificate

Traffic restricted roads mean more space for pedestrians to move slowly and freely

Experience from longer established LTNs

LTNs first emerged under Transport for London (TfL) in the 1970s. For the long view see

<https://madeby.tfl.gov.uk/2020/12/15/low-traffic-neighbourhoods/>

Evidence from established LTNs in other London boroughs suggests that the traffic on main roads reduces over time back to pre-LTN levels as local people increasingly adjust to active travel. In Highbury and Finsbury Park, major roadworks coincided with the introduction of the LTNs in January and made it impossible to ascertain any actual change in traffic volume and journey times on main roads. As in other boroughs, we need time for people to adapt before judging their impact.

Local shops which deliver are already finding there are alternatives to diesel vans, such as cargo bikes and pods which attach to bicycles as a sort of shopping trolley. More local businesses are changing to using bicycles, or power-assisted bicycles for local deliveries. Bicycles can go through restricted roads as before. Vans can still access all areas but, like cars, not drive across from one area to another without going via a main road. Free parking for Islington resident permit holders in any parking between 11-3 on weekdays is unaffected. This means that people can still drive to shops if they are unable to walk. See www.islington.gov.uk **People Friendly Streets** or <https://www.lowtraffichighbury.co.uk/> for detailed information.

Consultation

The council will conduct an evaluation of the LTNs after 12 months. In the meantime we can make our views heard via the websites <https://islingtonpeoplefriendlystreets.commonplace.is/> and <https://www.lowtraffichighbury.co.uk/>

Alternatively write to your local councillors or your MP if you have any comments or suggestions. People who support LTNs should particularly let the council know of their support, to balance the argument. Angry opponents are well-organised and tend to be a lot more vocal than supporters and already have a poster campaign in some areas. Feedback helps to ensure LTNs will work for the whole community while helping to combat climate change by reducing traffic volume on our streets.



Sheri Lawal from “Choices” spoke at our on-line committee meeting on Monday 22nd February. This is a community interest company, with a holistic approach in tackling social and economic issues that affect the well-being of local people.

Sheri explained that they are there for all age groups: young people at risk of exclusion from school, not in education, employment or training; people who need help and find it more comfortable to have access to their own cultural food; assistance to access the digital media — giving one-to-one help and classes.

On this last point, Choices is hoping that the Council will positively consider having broadband on its residential estates for all to use.

But mainly Sheri emphasised the need to reach out to people, to be a friendly face and voice, to understand vulnerability and loneliness... there is a motto on Choices website: “Never look down on someone unless you are helping them up”

ONE IN FOUR PEOPLE AGED 70+ ADMIT TO BEING A VICTIM OF FINANCIAL ABUSE

A quarter of people aged 70 or above have suffered financial abuse according to a new survey by financial service “GuardianCard”. It also reveals that more — 56% fear they are more of a target for thefts, scams and frauds due to the pandemic.

Covid, with its financial pressures and social isolation have created a “perfect storm” with older people more dependent on carers, family and friends, with a greater risk of financial abuse from rogue traders, professional scammers and even loved ones.

But the most common type of financial abuse cited by the 2,000 70+ people surveyed was falling victim to professional scammers, with 68% of people saying they had been targeted in this way.

Others have been mis-sold goods, services and investments (34%), trusted someone who failed to act in their best interests (23%) or had a family member steal from them (13%). Financial abuse can have a serious emotional impact, with some victims saying they had suffered ill-health and psychological problems.

GuardianCard was set up following a personal experience of one of the co-founders, Nick Thompson, who says that it is a financial service to help the most vulnerable, whilst still allowing the senior population to retain their independence.

A friend sent me this newspaper cutting from a 1940 local paper in Kilburn.

I wonder how many of us remember our gas masks (and name tags for those of us who were evacuated). Maybe it will take us all longer than we think to stop reaching for our covid-masks after we have been told that things are back to normal?! Dot



Islington Pensioners Forum says:

**STOP THE SALE
OF 49
GP SURGERIES
TO U.S.
CORPORATION
CENTENE
SIGN THE
PETITION AT
weownit.org.uk**

Dear All,

For a number of reasons, I could not do my usual “View from the Chair” this month, but I wholeheartedly endorse the decision to make the US Company takeover of NHS surgeries the main theme of this issue, and, as you can see, I signed the letter published on page 1. So important is it that we pull together and make a stand with others to defend our PUBLIC National Health Service, that I am using this note to ask everybody to do their best to sign the petition — ask your family or a friend to help if you are not personally on line — and to display the above poster — which is at the back of this newsletter.

Best wishes, stay safe — Bob Collins

INFORMATION

Islington Pensioners Forum officers and committee 2019-2020: Chair **Bob Collins**
Secretary/Treasurer: **Eric Hill**, Assistant Secretary: **Annette Thomas**,
Committee: **Frances Bradley, Luke Daniels, Dot Gibson, Irma Gomez, Eula Harrison, Joyce Herron, David Milner, Eddie Zissler, Pam Zinkin**

Peter Crockett holds IT classes on-line during the lockdown

Peter Crockett runs an IT class on-line during the lock down, and so it is probable that he can help with any problems you have with computers or smartphones. If you have access to internet, you can get yourself on his list of participants; to get involved, contact Peter, his email address is:

High Court ruled that the Health Secretary acted unlawfully

In newsletters during the Covid pandemic we have pointed out that the government has handed lucrative contracts to companies with no experience of the product they are requested to supply, have not properly posted the contracts for the public tender process and have failed to publish the awarded contracts within the 30-day period required by law.

Now, the High Court has ruled that the health secretary, Matt Hancock, acted unlawfully by failing to publish multibillion-pound Covid-19 government contracts within the 30-day period. The judge, Mr Justice Chamberlain, ruled the failure to do so breached the "vital public function" of transparency over how "vast quantities" of taxpayers' money was being spent.

This was a victory for the Good Law Project (GLP), a crowdfunded not-for-profit organisation that is making a series of legal challenges relating to the government's procurement of protective personal equipment

(PPE) and other services during the pandemic.

Research by the procurement consultancy Tussell had found that by the beginning of October, Hancock's Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) had spent approximately £15bn buying PPE from different companies, but only £2.68bn worth of contracts had been published.

Government regulations require all contracts with a value of more than £10,000 to be published, and to be sent for publication within 30 days of being awarded.

The GLP highlighted three PPE contracts to illustrate their case: a £252m contract for the supply of face masks with a finance company, Ayanda Capital; a £108m contract with Clandeboye Agencies, which had previously supplied only confectionery products, and PPE contracts worth £345m with a company trading as Pestfix, a pest control company.

A big thank-you to all those members who responded to our request for membership subscriptions in the February newsletter.

This has encouraged us to publish our request again this month! Let's hope that it will not be long before we can meet again and have an "end the covid blues" party!

Remember that the annual membership subscription for IPF is £5, and although we cannot meet, we are doing our best to produce and post the newsletter, and so please send your £5 to our office, address on page 1, cheques payable to "IPF".

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