

MRI services at the Slough Community Diagnostic Centre (Slough CDC)

Background

The Slough Community Diagnostic Centre (Slough CDC) is due to commence in the spring of 2025. The project which is aimed at bringing diagnostic tests close to the community is to be run by Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust. The diagnostic services involving Radiology at the proposed centre include X ray, Ultrasound, CT, and MRI. The MRI team at Wexham Park and Heatherwood hospitals provide MRI services on behalf of Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust serving the same communities that the Slough CDC are meant for. The Trust is planning to subcontract only the MRI services at the Slough CDC to a private company which is part of a medium to long term plan of privatising MRI services across to whole sites in the Trust. This poses significant risks to our jobs as the team that provide MRI services on behalf of Frimley Health to the communities within the Frimley North area that includes Slough.

Timeline of Events

1. November 2023-MRI team discovers plans by the management to privatise the provision of MRI services at the Slough CDC
2. 06/12/2023-MRI team wrote to the Radiology department management on the CDC expressing their viewpoints as follow:
 - a. The MRI team is excited about the Slough CDC project which as identified will bring diagnostic services close to the community and decongest the pressure at the Wexham site.
 - b. We would like to understand what influenced the decision to subcontract out the provision of MRI services to a private provider and would also like to add that the MRI team were not given a chance to express their thoughts internally within Radiology as to this exciting project.
 - c. The MRI team at the Wexham/Heatherwood site is made up of very dedicated, hardworking, and highly skilled staff working for the Frimley Health and provide MRI services for the Slough community and surrounding towns; the same community the CDC project will serve. We are confident that the team will provide much better and more efficient service to the community we belong to than a profit oriented private enterprise.

d. We realised that the Slough CDC project is going to provide various diagnostic services and wondering why MRI has been singled out for contracting out to a profit making organisation.

e. The team is committed to working with the trust and departmental management with its strategic plans that will ensure continuous provision of excellent service to our local communities.

3. On 25/01/24, two senior managers in Radiology department met the MRI team regarding the Slough CDC and informed the team that the trust was exploring all options that no decision has been made yet. The MRI team in turn informed the managers that we will be writing the Chief Executive to make our own argument for the MRI services at the Slough CDC to be provided in-house which they did not oppose.

4. On 20/05/24, the General Manager of Radiology department called the MRI team for a meeting to update us on the Slough CDC. The update we were given was that there was no update.

5. On 01/07/24, the MRI team sent a letter to the Board Chairman and Chief Executive of the Trust arguing for the provision of MRI services at the Slough CDC to be retained in-house like other modalities in the project. The Board Chairman replied acknowledging the letter and promising that he will ensure we get a substantive reply.

6. On 03/07/24, the Radiology General Manager called a meeting with the MRI team where she informed us that the trust has received tenders for the MRI services at the Slough CDC and that the Trust management is examining them stating that the final decision has not been made as far as she knows. We asked if she could guarantee in writing that our jobs are safe, but she declined.

7. On 19/07/24, a representative of the MRI team met the Slough MP regarding the planned Privatisation, and he requested for the details to be sent to him in an email.

8. On 22/07/24, an email with the explanation of the planned privatisation was sent to the Slough MP. Also, same day, another email explaining the planned privatisation was sent to the Lead Councillor for Health at the Slough Borough Council.

Our demands from the management

1. Rescind the plans to subcontract the MRI services at the Slough CDC and bring it in-house just like other diagnostic modalities in the project. The evidence we gathered strongly suggests that provision of the MRI services by the staff employed by the trust will deliver a more efficient and effective service that will yield better outcomes for our patients and better value for money for the taxpayer.

2. The MRI team should be given the opportunity to express our views and thoughts not only on the CDC project but on subsequent matters and projects that involve the diagnostic services which we provide on behalf of the trust. We believe that the team has been sidelined in the decision regarding the MRI services at the Slough CDC and as such the team felt disregarded and undervalued.

Summary

The plan to subcontract the MRI services at the proposed Slough CDC pose a significant threat to our jobs, our careers, and our pensions within the NHS which we have built over several years. It will be a step closer to the end plan of privitising the provision MRI services and indeed more services across the Trust.