

PULSE

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BMA chair's centre is among those getting on average three times more than GMS practices

Darzi centre funding dwarfs GMS cash

Exclusive

By Gareth Iacobucci

The GP-led health centre jointly run by BMA chair Dr Hamish Meldrum is one of many receiving vastly higher levels of funding than traditional practices, Pulse can reveal.

Our investigation shows funding per patient at GP-led health centres is almost three times as high on average, and in some cases as much as seven times as high, as at GMS practices.

Some 25 PCTs released details of contracts under the Freedom of Information Act, although many more refused, claiming the release of figures would prejudice future tendering processes.

Trusts are paying an average of £180.92 per registered patient to GP-led health centres in their first year, far outstripping estimated average funding of £63.24 per patient for GMS and £78.63 for PMS contracts.

But those figures mask huge variation. NHS Halton and St Helens is providing the highest funding – £560 per patient in the first year – and two further trusts are paying more than £400 per patient, whereas one centre in the South-East is getting just £63.21 per patient.

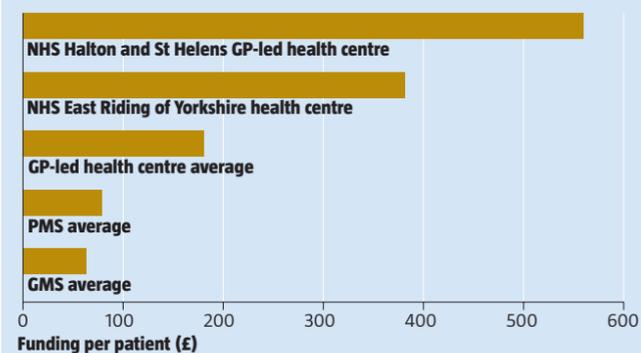
NHS East Riding of Yorkshire is near the top of the list, paying a collaboration of local practices – including Dr Meldrum's – an initial £381.47 per registered patient to provide care at the new centre, which opened earlier this month.

A few trusts revealed providers would be paid progressively



Trusts are paying an average of £180.92 per registered patient to GP-led health centres in their first year

How Darzi centre funding outstrips GMS



Source: Details of contracts provided by 25 PCTs; GP-led health centre figures are for first year of contracts; PMS and GMS figures are national average

less over the five-year period of contracts, based on an assumption of increased list sizes.

Among these are Dr Meldrum's centre, which will receive a rate of £102.86 by the fifth year of the contract, and NHS Halton and St Helens, which will reduce funding per patient to £203 over the same period.

NHS Halton and St Helens said its centre's year-one list

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was only 1,000 patients and the profit percentage within 'tolerance levels suggested by the Department of Health'. Other PCTs said GP-led health centres offered more services, and for longer, than GP practices.

Dr Meldrum sought to distance himself from the discussion over funding levels, telling Pulse he was not 'actively involved' in the planning or delivery of the new centre.

He said: 'All PCTs have a responsibility to make sure resources are allocated equitably.'

Dr Meldrum, who first attracted criticism back in January following his practice's successful bid to run the centre, added: 'I would have much preferred the new money had gone to existing practices. It was only when it became absolutely clear this not an option that local practices decided the least worst option was to try to exert some control over the centre.'

Dr Chaand Nagpaul, GPC negotiator and a GP in Stanmore, Middlesex, urged the Government to learn the lessons from independent sector treatment centres, which were often paid large sums regardless of how many patients were seen: 'This demonstrates the huge amount of money being spent by PCTs, at a time when the NHS is being asked to save £15bn.'

The DH said it had issued guidance urging PCTs to do 'local evaluations' of GP-led health centres.

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► Have your say

Is the cost of the centres too high?

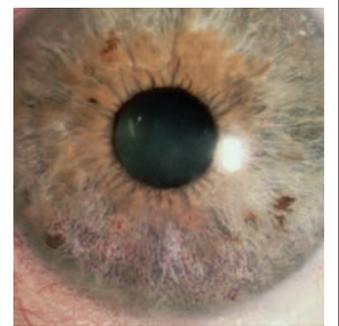
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