

The #NHS: the end is almost nigh, with Virgin and Serco...

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The Guardian's reported:

Core [children](#)'s health services in Devon may be about to be privatised in a move that critics have warned is a foretaste of the breaking up of the [NHS](#) that, they say, will take place when the government's health and social care bill becomes law.

The Guardian has learned that NHS Devon and Devon county council have shortlisted bids led by two private, profit-making companies — Serco and Virgin Care — to provide frontline services for children across the county, including some of the most sensitive care for highly vulnerable children and families, such as child protection, treatment for mentally ill children and adolescents, therapy and respite care for those with disabilities, health visiting, and palliative nursing for dying children.

Also on the shortlist for the £130m three-year NHS contract is Devon Partnership NHS Trust, bidding along with Barnardo's and other local charities. But a source close to the process, which is now in its fourth and final stage, has told the Guardian that one of the two commercial companies' bids looks likely to win the tender.

Final bids will be evaluated in May. The contract will be awarded to "the most economically advantageous" bid, according to criteria listed for it on the European commission website, where any European public tenders are required by competition law to be published.

So now we know: EU competition law applies. That spells the end of the health service: integration becomes an impossibility now. And that is obvious. As the Guardian reports:

Because Devon children's services are part of a bid for a commercial contract, Serco said commercial law prohibited it from commenting on them.

Virgin Care also said it could not comment on its tender before a winner had been announced.

Everything is about privity of contract and profit now; nothing about

accountability, transparency or integration, and that's despite the fact that neither company has ever run children's services and both are already in dispute with the NHS, as the Guardian notes. In Serco's case those failures look to be serious.

And how common is this? The Guardian again:

Since the Department of Health is not collecting data centrally on tenders, it is impossible to be sure how many other similar bids are under way.

Despite all the claims the Secretary of State has already abandoned his duty for the health service, and has retained it only for the generation of profit, which he has devolved to his friends.

The end of the NHS is almost nigh.