

# A Final Appeal to Protect Inpatient Cancer Care at PRUH

By Michael Douglas

Founder, The Chartwell Cancer Trust



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As *The Chartwell Charities' 13-week series exploring local cancer care draws to a close*, founder Michael Douglas reflects on what matters most to patients and families – and why the campaign to retain inpatient services at PRUH must continue.

Over the past twelve weeks, The Chartwell Charities has shared the voices of patients, families, clinicians, volunteers and supporters, and explored what cancer care means for the people who depend on it. We have heard about the value of specialist local services, the strain of repeated hospital journeys, the importance of family presence, and the practical support that helps children and adults cope with the profound upheaval cancer treatment can bring.

Taken together, these stories have made one thing clear: decisions about cancer care cannot be judged by service models and system efficiencies alone. They must also be tested against what they will mean for the everyday realities of patients and families. That principle is precisely why I want to end this series where it began: with the future of dedicated inpatient haematology cancer care at Princess Royal University Hospital.

When I set out my concerns in an open letter thirteen weeks ago, King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust's formal engagement process was drawing to a close. That process has since ended, and the Trust is now weighing the evidence and feedback before presenting its revised proposals for formal scrutiny. A decision of lasting importance for our community is still being shaped.

What King's set out during the engagement period remains deeply troubling: the removal of dedicated inpatient haematology cancer care from PRUH and its centralisation at Denmark Hill. As a long-standing supporter of the NHS, I recognise the need for service change where it brings genuine improvement to patient care. But I continue to dispute the basis of these proposals in the strongest terms. Day-case care is not the same as a dedicated inpatient ward. It cannot replace local hospital care for patients who become acutely unwell during treatment, need admission, require overnight monitoring or depend on immediate access to experienced cancer teams.

Throughout this process, serious questions have been raised by patients, relatives, clinicians, councillors, Healthwatch Bromley and The Chartwell Cancer Trust itself.

How will vulnerable patients be admitted quickly and safely if local inpatient beds are removed? What additional bed and staff capacity will exist at Denmark Hill? What happens to those who need urgent care but cannot easily manage long cross-London journeys? How will family presence, already so important during serious illness, be protected? These unresolved questions go to the heart of whether any proposed change is safe, fair and workable in practice.

For the ward itself, this prolonged period of uncertainty is already taking a toll. The Chartwell inpatient ward has now spent many months under the shadow of possible removal. When the future of a valued unit is placed in doubt, staff confidence is shaken, stability becomes harder to maintain, and the resilience of the service itself is put under strain. At the outset of this series, I argued that fragility calls for rebuilding and investment, not removal. I believe that even more strongly now.

The Chartwell Cancer Trust has worked alongside the Chartwell Unit, its clinicians, nurses, patients and their families for more than two decades, funding staff, equipment, treatment environments and practical support. Through that enduring partnership, we have seen what this service means to the people who rely on it, and that is why I will continue to speak out for its protection while its future remains in question.

The formal engagement period may be over, but the public's role is not. Before King's presents its revised proposals for scrutiny, our MPs and councillors need to understand the depth of feeling in this community – and the seriousness of what is at stake.

31,315 people have already signed the petition in opposition to this move. If you have not yet added your name, I urge you to do so now. But I am also asking you to go further: write personally to your MP and to your local councillors and ask them to support the retention of inpatient haematology cancer care at PRUH.

We are not asking for money. We are asking for your voice.

For more than twenty years, this community has helped The Chartwell Cancer Trust stand beside local cancer patients and families. I am asking now for that same community to stand beside the Chartwell Unit.

**I am convinced that removing this inpatient service from PRUH would be a dangerous and deeply damaging decision for local patients and families.**

## About The Chartwell Charities

### The Chartwell Cancer Trust

Founded in 2005, The Chartwell Cancer Trust has supported cancer services at Princess Royal University Hospital for more than 20 years. Its funding has strengthened staffing, refurbished treatment areas, provided essential clinical equipment and offered financial assistance to patients facing costs linked to care.



### The Chartwell Children's Cancer Trust

Established in 2015, The Chartwell Children's Cancer Trust works with paediatric oncology communities across South London, East Surrey and North Kent. It provides funding for ward improvements, specialist clinical equipment, major capital projects, family support groups, a respite lodge on the Isle of Wight, AV1 robots and direct financial help to families during treatment.



## Protect Inpatient Cancer Care at PRUH

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is currently developing proposals to remove dedicated inpatient haematology cancer care from PRUH and centralise it at Denmark Hill, while expanding day-case provision locally.

Following a public engagement period in March, the Trust is now reviewing feedback and preparing its revised proposals. These are expected to be presented to the Bromley Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee in July, subject to confirmation.

### Add Your Voice

31,315 people have already signed the petition in opposition to this move.

Scan the QR code to add your name.

We are also asking local residents to write personally to their MP and local councillors, urging them to support the retention of inpatient haematology cancer care at PRUH.

For guidance on writing your own letter, or for further info, contact The Chartwell Charities. [info@chartwellcancertrust.co.uk](mailto:info@chartwellcancertrust.co.uk)

