



How many jobs will be lost in the NHS?

They, along with the Conservatives, say the total number of jobs losses linked to the current financial crisis in the NHS will be nearer to 20,000.

So how many people will actually be out of work because of the current NHS reorganisation?

Since consultations on proposals are ongoing in NHS trusts up and down England, it is not actually clear what the final tally will be.

But it looks as though both sides might be right.

As Tony Blair and NHS managers say, the total number of compulsory redundancies is likely to be in the hundreds.

However, many more people will be affected.

Posts are likely to close, staff will not be replaced when they leave and remaining staff may be moved to different departments and responsibilities.

And adding up all the posts affected by redundancy, post closure, failure to recruit or staff movement could be near 20,000.

The NHS Confederation, which represents managers in the health service, says: "The figures being widely quoted of up to 20,000 may turn out to not be too far off the total reduction in workforce numbers this year.

"This applies, however, not to people being made redundant but to the number of posts being taken out of the system in a total workforce of some 1.3 million."

Pressure

But health unions say the ultimate effect will be fewer staff trying to do the same amount of work, and that patient care will suffer.

Karen Jennings of Unison told the BBC: "The fact is that redundancies are the tip of the iceberg. If somebody is made redundant - that's it, the end of the road.

"But if you are a health professional, in a situation where you are working in a ward where they are not going to fill a vacancy, that means you and the remaining members of your team have got to steel yourselves to try to deliver the same standards of care.

"And it's fair to say the NHS has never been flush with staff."

Geoff Martin, of the pressure group Health Emergency, said: "Tony Blair's attempt to play down the jobs carnage in the NHS is a kick in the teeth for thousands of NHS workers up and down the country waiting to find out if they next on the cuts hit list.

"It's no wonder that health workers are so angry when they see the prime minister deliberately misleading the country on the real impact on the wards of new Labour health policy."

Liberal Democrat health spokesman Steve Webb said: "The Prime Minister is totally out of touch with reality.

"Around the country people are campaigning in their thousands against threats to their local hospitals.

"With the new NHS Chief Executive saying that up to 60 'reconfigurations' are yet to come, more enormously disruptive job losses and service cuts can be expected."

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