Protests over Palantir involvement in NHS as Burnham and Labour’s links exposed

Our reporters
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As thousands protested across Britain against Palantir Technologies as part of a global day of action on October 1, the *Guardian* revealed in an exclusive that a lobbyist for the US data and military-intelligence corporation played a senior role in Prime Minister Andy Burnham’s campaign to become Labour leader, prior to his entering Downing Street in July.

Palantir was co-founded by the Trump-supporting billionaire Peter Thiel and its software is used by the Israeli military in the Gaza genocide, the US war on Iran and in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids across American cities. It runs NHS England’s £330 million Federated Data Platform (FDP).

Lobbyist Martha Dalton co-founded Lodestone, a London-based political strategy and public affairs consultancy that worked for Palantir in 2024 and 2025, including promoting its AI-powered systems to MPs at events in parliament.

Dalton was among those who clapped Burnham into Downing Street. She wrote on her LinkedIn account that it had been “an absolute honour to work on Andy Burnham’s campaign to become Labour leader and prime minister”. She took six weeks’ unpaid leave from Lodestone to spend time in Makerfield, where the June by-election returned Burnham to parliament, “supporting on strategic comms and rebuttals”. Dalton’s own Lodestone profile notes that she “advised on a number of political campaigns and formed part of the communications operations for Labour Party leadership candidates Tom Watson (2015), Lisa Nandy (2020), Lucy Powell (2025) and Andy Burnham (2026).”

Watson was Labour’s former deputy leader, who played a vital role in the removal of the Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader. Last month Watson left the House of Lords to take up the position of senior vice president for Palantir.

More than 44,000 people have now filed legal objections to Palantir’s NHS platform handling their data. Coordinated by campaigning organisation 38 Degrees, the objections invoke the right to object under UK data protection law.

The *Guardian* cited David Murray, a retired IBM systems engineer, who said, “I am a believer in the NHS having really good data on their patients, but I want it to be something you can really trust to be used for the right purposes. I am not happy about Palantir’s involvement with the IDF in Gaza and ICE in America.”

Health workers, patients and campaigners protested across Britain on Thursday, demanding that the National Health Service cut ties with Palantir. More than 40 protests were held at hospitals and Integrated Care Boards across England as well as in city centres. Their demand is that the Labour government not renew the Palantir’s FDP contract, due for review in February 2027.

NHS FightBack supporters distributed the article “Thousands to protest Palantir’s role in NHS, US deportations and Gaza genocide ” at the protests.

Leicester

At Leicester Royal Infirmary, health workers, students, NHS patients and pro-Palestine supporters protested, as passing motorists sounded their horns in support.

Neil, a patient, said, “I think it’s important that we keep the NHS public and resist the creeping privatisation that is going on… What Palantir are really trying to do is collect data, patient records, which they can sell on when the NHS is broken up and sold to American private companies.”

Asked about Palantir’s role in Gaza, he said, “That tells you all you need to know. They have no morals, no ethics whatsoever.” Of co-founder Peter Thiel, he said, “He’s openly against democracy of any kind. He’s quite willing to help genocidal dictators like Netanyahu go about their business.”

Emma, employed by University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL), said, “This is a company involved in surveillance, in rounding up and deporting civilians. The patient data we hold could fall into the wrong hands and be used in targeting certain demographics.”

Asked about Palantir at UHL, she said, “I believe it’s superfluous to requirements, because we have ORMIS [Operating Room Management Information System] for our theatre lists. We have something called Qlik Sense, which is a data analytic software, which everybody knows how to use. I don’t really see how FDP is going to make any improvements. If anything, it’s just bringing together this sensitive information to one place, putting it into the hands of, who knows, the government.”

Referring to the strike on a girls’ school in Minab on February 28, the first day of the war on Iran, she said, “If not Palantir, it was something like Palantir technology, using AI to target a military target that turned out to be a girls’ school. They killed all those girls, and this could happen again. We don’t want to see some US-style ICE, Gestapo, secret police scenario here. Where is the

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compassion in Palantir? It is completely inhuman."

Jaclyn, a University of Leicester student said, "I absolutely hate capitalism, and it's an extension of that. The majority of people do not like the fact that these big companies are using our data, using our money to kill children. I am not going to stand for that in any way."

Southampton

In Southampton, people protested outside an NHS mental health services centre at Frobisher House near the city's central railway station. Karen, a retired librarian, said, "I think it's very dangerous that private companies are making money out of getting involved with our public services. I was born during the Second World War, and the setting up of the NHS has saved so many lives."

Asked whether defending the NHS was connected to opposing the Gaza genocide and ICE raids, she said, "Absolutely, because the NHS is devoted to saving lives. We've seen the rise of fascist groups and also there's lots of money to be made by having wars.

"If you think about what's happening in the Middle East, the way they've devastated Gaza and the number of deaths, and they're still pulling bodies out of the rubble."

Peter, from Amnesty International's Salisbury group, said, "Information being gleaned in the UK ends up in American hands without any control by ourselves. Palantir have been closely involved with the IDF in Israel. And they're also a keen supporter of the Trump administration's ICE programme, where several thousand people have been snatched from the streets and from their homes.

"Palantir makes many extravagant claims about efficiency and saving waiting times, but people who have looked at the statistics and the data say they are very much exaggerated."

On Labour's role, he said, "I don't have a great deal of confidence in people like Yvette Cooper [Health Secretary]. The trouble is that a lot of these American companies, certainly the tech companies, they are deeply involved in the British body politic. They put a huge amount of money into political parties."

Stevenage

Outside Lister Hospital in Stevenage, Ruth, a patient, said her main concern was what Palantir does with data and its use by the Israeli military to kill people in Gaza. "Once they have our data, the genie's out of the bottle," she said, dismissing data-protection assurances as "a load of rubbish".

The contract was about profit, not improving the NHS, she said, pointing to refutations of the claim that 800,000 patients had been removed from waiting lists. Ruth warned the next step would be data handed to the police and other authorities beyond public control.

She said "I'm thinking of writing to both organisations [GP and hospitals] to say, 'Remove any information you've got about me and confirm that you've done that, because if I'm ill, they can start again.' I do have a recollection of writing to them several years ago to say, I don't want you to pass on my information to anybody."

Ruth added, "My other concern is that Peter Thiel, of Palantir, is very friendly with [New Labour co-founder] Peter Mandelson. He's also very friendly—was—with Jeffrey Epstein, and I just think the government and politicians at the time knew what was going on and still allowed it to happen, which is why we are now having a battle. We now understand more about Palantir, and it should never have been allowed into our systems, let alone the NHS."

She described Burnham as "window dressing", citing his 2015 pledge that Israel would be his first foreign visit as Labour leader and his support, as Shadow Home Secretary, of Labour Friends of Israel.

Manchester

In Manchester, around 150 people protested outside Number 10 North, Burnham's office in the city.

A protester said, "I don't think we should be giving data of people in the UK to a company in a different country with different laws, and especially that have different priorities. I don't believe the NHS should be privatised. It should be publicly run for everyone."

Another asked what she thought of the organisers demand of putting pressure on Burnham to halt Palantir's NHS contract, said, "Burnham is just a puppet. I don't think he's going to do anything at all."

Ben, a young unemployed worker, said, "Burnham's a lot better at marketing himself than anything. Palantir is an evil company, a modern-day creature with its blueprint in Gaza." His friend, a healthcare worker, added, "They are replacing a system that doesn't need replacing."

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