



Lewisham Hospital Worker

Issue 22 (25 June 2013)

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

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Why nothing runs smoothly

Even before cuts have really kicked in in Lewisham, the “need” to cut spending results in perverse outcomes everywhere you look.

Sometimes it seems there's a conspiracy to waste as much money, and patients' time, as possible. For example, to “save money”, the Trust relies on a minimum number of pharmacists. The pharmacists have to prioritise delivery to the wards to maintain safety, so TTOs have to go to the bottom of the list. So if a doctor comes round in the morning and says a patient (let's call her Ms. A) is now ready to go home, that patient can probably expect to have to settle in for the rest of the day before she can actually leave. Unfortunately, the patient is likely to be so excited at the prospect of escape that she immediately packs her bags and arranges for a relative to come and collect her. The ensuing six-hour wait can be very frustrating for all concerned.

This is not as much of a problem, however, as it is for the patient in A&E (let's call him Mr. B). The decision has been made that Mr. B needs admitting. Some investigations, and a plan of treatment, are likely to be necessary, but unless it's a dire emergency this isn't likely to happen until he's settled on a ward. As Ms. A doesn't need the bed any more, as the doctor has said she can go home, Mr. B could be admitted straight away. The clerking and investigations could be well underway by the end of the day, except that there aren't enough pharmacists to process Ms. A's TTOs for the next six hours.

By the time Mr. B is finally admitted, it's nighttime, and no investigations will happen until the next day. So that's an extra £300 or so spent on having Ms. A in a bed she didn't need for a day she could have spent at home, and more importantly Mr. B's treatment has effectively been delayed by a day.

A pharmacist doesn't cost nearly as much as a bed in hourly terms. A pharmacist employed for the day could have dispensed the TTOs earlier, and saved a day's expenditure on an unnecessary admission. And in that day, that pharmacist could have done a lot more besides — five TTOs, more is probably not an unreasonable day's work to save over £1,000. It's easy maths, and to both patients the extra day may be invaluable.

Other examples include:

- Lack of nurses — more falls, fractures, increased LOS
- Lack of porters — nurses acting as porters, leading to lack of nurses, more falls, fractures, increased LOS

- Lack of admin workers — delayed clinic letters, practitioners unaware of information, treatments delayed
- Lack of admin workers — phone messages not passed on as quickly, practitioners unaware of information, treatments delayed
- Lack of printers — delayed clinic letters
- Lack of porters — delay in medication delivery to wards, delay in treatments, patients symptoms worsen due to delay, increased LOS
- Lack of porters — delay in collection of patients from recovery, patients who have been NBM all day miss meals, are malnourished, delayed healing times, increased LOS
- Lack of porters — delay in collection of patients from recovery, delay in surgery due to overflowing recovery, delay in treatment, poorer outcomes increased LOS
- Lack of bed linen — porters and nurses going ward to ward looking for equipment, less staff on wards, more falls, more fractures, increased LOS

Lesson: if you cut back on staff and equipment, it results *increased* expenditure, and worse outcomes for patients!

Unite the union

Unite has supported the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign, with reps and regional officers involved in the steering committee and working groups.

The union also funded the successful “Hunt for Hunt” event on Saturday 15 June (see overleaf).

Unite is the only major health union currently organising meaningful action to save the NHS. Nationally, pressure from Unite has resulted in several unions, including Unison, calling a national demo in defence of the NHS at the Tory party conference in Manchester on 29 September.

Here in Lewisham, Unite now has elected representation for members within the Trust, and is seeking to form a branch committee to help support and organise their members in the Trust.

If you would like more information about this, please e-mail: uniteinlewisham@gmail.com. To join Unite online, go to www.unitetheunion.org

LHW provides a forum for staff at the hospital to tell their stories and air their views. If you have a story to tell or an opinion to share then get in touch. The bulletin is edited by healthcare professionals and we will ensure confidentiality is upheld.



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Hunt hunted

On Saturday 15 June, the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign, with support and funding from Unite, hosted a "Hunt for Hunt", an ambitious event that, with careful planning and preparation, turned out to be inspiring.

Coaches from all around London, carrying campaigners from all the major NHS campaign groups in the capital, including the Defend Whittington Hospital Coalition, Save Our Hospitals Ealing, and Save Hammersmith and Charing Cross Hospitals, travelled to Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt's constituency in Farnham, Surrey.

Campaigners went door to door, explaining the issues effecting the NHS, and getting signatures for a petition calling on the government to stop closing local hospitals and services. We gathered over 1,000 signatures in just one day. Local campaigners from the Guildford Keep Our NHS Public group will continue gathering signatures locally, and intend to present this to Jeremy Hunt.

People in Farnham welcomed campaigners to their town, inviting us into their homes, and talking about the problems they face locally, with one of their hospitals having been taken over by Virgin, and two hospitals due to merge. Many campaigners visited a fete that was raising money for their local hospice, who announced on the local radio that we were visiting. Local BBC crews covered the

event, and details went out on Saturday lunchtime news.

At the end of the day, demonstrators — joined by many local people — marched through the town. This was the first demonstration in Farnham since the 1980s.

Almost without exception the people on the streets gave messages of support before we finally departed to return for London.

• savelewishamhospital.com

Arise, Sir Brendan!

In the Queen's Birthday honours list Brendan Barber, outgoing head of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), received a knighthood.



Barber has served the ruling class well during his time in office and it has not gone unnoticed at Buckingham Palace.

900,000 were plunged into poverty in the first year of the Coalition government. 7.5 million now live in relative poverty, including 2.3 million children. At the same time, the richest 1% have recovered all the cash they lost during the 2008 crisis and are wealthier than at any point in history.

What has the TUC done about this? Nothing. We have had two marches through London and a one-day public sector strike on pensions in November 2011 before Barber and others engineered a surrender.

Barber's delight at receiving this knighthood is a sign that he was always working for the ruling class.

Hands up who's got business interests that will profit from a privatised NHS



David Cameron, George Osborne, Iain Duncan Smith, Andrew Lansley, William Hague, Phillip Hammond, Francis Maude, Liam Fox, Maria Miller, Michael Fallon, Andrew Mitchell, Harriet Baldwin, Mike Freer, Gregory Barker, Jake Berry, Simon Burns, Nick de Bois, Andrew Bridgen, Aidan Burley, David Davies, Jonathan Djanogly, Phillip Dunne, Mark Field, George Freeman, Richard Fuller, Dominic Grieve, Margot James, Mark Lancaster, Oliver Letwin, Peter Lilley, Tim Loughton, Mary MacLeod, Priti Patel, Patrick Mercer, Penny Morduant, Brooks Newmark, Jesse Norman, Stephen O'Brien, Richard Ottaway, Jacob Rees-Mogg, John Redwood, Malcolm Rifkind, David Ruffley, Mark Simmonds, Chris Skidmore, Nicholas Soames, Andrew Tyrie, David Willets, Rob Wilson, Nadim Zahawi

NHS could lose £3.35 billion to fraud

A report by Centre for Health and Public Interest estimates that £3.35 billion could be lost to fraud as private companies take over parts of the NHS.

Private firms will tend to "upcode" patients complaints — diagnosing them with more severe conditions than they actually have to get a higher payment.

The opportunities for upcoding already exist due to the Payment by Results system. According to a 2006 report from the Audit Commission, 12% of all treatments and diagnoses were given the wrong clinical code.

In the USA, big private healthcare firms like UnitedHealth, McKesson, and Hospital Care America (HCA) have all been found guilty of fraud in recent years.

Our government reduced the size of the NHS anti-fraud department, NHS Protect, by 21% in 2011.