



Lewisham

Issue 23 (2 July 2013)

Hospital Worker

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

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To the next 65 and beyond!

The hugely successful "People's Commission" on Saturday 29 June launched the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign's "Week of Justice", which will culminate with a celebration for the NHS' 65th birthday on Friday 5 July.

The fact that we've managed to keep the NHS for this long is a massive achievement, but the fight is really on to keep it for the future. It's going to take all of us working together to make sure that the NHS outlives us all.



This week, Lewisham Council passed policy to demand that MPs review Hunt's decision in parliament.

It is worth using every tool to campaign to get the decision reversed and protect our services. But it would be a mistake to have faith in institutions such as the courts

and parliamentary committees to act in our interests. It's down to us to make sure our services don't close.

The Trust assures us that services will not be reduced for 2-3 years at the earliest. That is the TSA's timetable, but to defeat it we'll have to get our house in order a lot sooner than this. We'll have to be prepared to take matters into our own hands. How do we do this?

Firstly, after the merger in October we'll have to keep a close watch on how services change, anything that could make it easier to scale down services in the future must be highlighted to the campaign, and our unions so we can try to stop any potentially damaging changes happening.

Secondly, we need to get organised so we can communicate across the Trust, and decide together what we need to do to protect our services and jobs.

The best framework available to do this with Unite. If you've not joined yet, this union is recruiting members in the Trust at the moment, and will be having an AGM in September to set up a local branch.

Lots of people at the hospital are members of Unison. If you're a member of Unison, putting pressure on your branch committee may help get this union branch active in the struggle, which it hasn't been so far. The Unison branch secretary is Mike Davey; he's on NHS e-mail, so tell him what you think he should be doing.

Lastly, we need to stick together. Our jobs should be se-

cure for the next few years — who knows which Trusts will have vacancies or be making redundancies that far in the future? What we do know is that if too many staff leave our hospital, services would have to shut, so we need to stay in our jobs, and not leave.

We need to start seeing our role here not just as working for a wage, but providing and protecting a service that saves lives.

If we can succeed here we will inspire others - we are inspiring others already. We are a part of a historic fight to save the NHS. Here's to the next 65 years!

Celebrate the 65th anniversary of the NHS with the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign

Friday 5 July, 12-2pm at the War Memorial

**opposite Lewisham Hospital
Let's make sure the NHS outlives us all — everyone welcome!**

- Games and activities • Free cake
- Pin the tail on the donkey (guess who) • Speakers: Louise Irvine (Campaign Chair) and Anita Downs (hospital Unite rep)



YOU'RE INVITED TO A BIRTHDAY PARTY!

FROM 12-2PM
BY THE WAR MEMORIAL,
OPPOSITE LEWISHAM HOSPITAL

FREE CAKE PROVIDED!

How can we stop racism and fascism?

Wednesday 17 July, 7pm, Amersham Arms (New Cross)

The weeks following the murder of soldier Lee Rigby by Islamist activists saw a huge increase in racist attacks against Muslim people.



Against the backdrop of a growth of the anti-immigrant UK Independence Party, and "mainstream" racism from the three main parties, how can we organise against racism and fascism?

Join South London Workers' Liberty for this discussion.

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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Workers make the world go round!



Nurse Karl

**Our bearded
band 5 with
his finger on
the pulse of
industrial
unrest**

Dear Nurse Karl,
What happens if the judge rules in favour
of the government and Trust Special Ad-
ministrators?

Is it all over for the Save Lewisham Hos-
pital Campaign?

Best wishes, Joanne

Dear Joanne,

Not at all! It is very impressive that the
Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign has
been able to raise £20,000 to launch this
legal challenge.

However, the legal challenge is not the
last option. Even if we lose the legal chal-
lenge then there is still trade union and po-
litical action that we can take to stop the

cuts to our services.

Often it feels like we are quite powerless to create change. But
as workers we are extremely powerful if we act together. Our
power lies in the fact that our labour makes the world go
round. If we all refuse to work (or we refuse to work in the way
the bosses want us to) then this causes real problems. If a strike
is powerful and we are resilient then the bosses are quickly
forced into negotiating with us or give in to our demands.

There are difficult ethical issues with organising strikes in the
healthcare sector but nurses around the world have won strikes

and made real longterm gains for their health services. In the
case of service closures, we believe that the strike should be
used selectively — e.g. strikes of non-clinical staff, refusal to do
certain non-clinical tasks etc. The most effective strategy is the
work-in. This is a more democratic worker-led version of man-
agement's "Business as Usual" campaign. We believe that clini-
cal teams should start planning and organising now to continue
to run services after management have given the order to shut
them down. This cannot be done flippantly or on-the-hoof. But
it is not a fantasy to think this can happen. In the history of the
NHS, several hospitals have been "worked-in" and run under
the democratic control of clinical teams in defiance of govern-
ment attempts to shut them down.

The political strategy has to involve building grassroots pres-
sure on Labour as the only viable alternative to the Tories at the
next election. Local Labour politicians have been involved in
the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign but they have been
mealy-mouthed about PFI and privatisation. Andy Burnham,
Labour's shadow health minister, could easily promise to keep
a full functioning A&E at Lewisham if Labour win the next
election.

Such a pledge would delay the closure until after the next
election. Our unions are all affiliated to Labour — they should
be making sure that the NHS is the key battleground at the next
election.

Solidarity, Nurse Karl

People's Commission puts the case for Lewisham

**By Jill Mountford, Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign Steering Group
and member of the organising group Lewisham People's Commission
of Inquiry (pc)**

**"I was mesmerised"; "I sat there all day, most of the time
on the edge of my seat"; "We should have a People's
Commission into all the cuts they're making to all of our
services". These were just a few of the comments made
by many of the 600 people who attended the Lewisham
"People's Commission of Inquiry" on Saturday 29 June.**

The Commission, organised by the Save Lewisham Hospital
campaign, was an audacious and bold thing to do. From 9.30am
to 5.30pm, more than 25 witnesses gave evidence and were cross
examined by four barristers from Took's Chambers in effort to ex-
pose the lies the government and its agents have told about
Lewisham Hospital to justify the closure of services and the sell-
off of land.

GPs and consultants spoke of a meeting they were invited to as
part of the Trust Special Administrator's (TSA) consultation before
Hunt's announcement was made in January this year. They each

described how any opposition or ques-
tioning of the TSA's proposals was ig-
nored.

In a world where we're fed a daily
diet of tripe as if we're all too stupid to
understand a detailed analysis of any-
thing, where we start to believe that
we've all got the concentration span of a goldfish and all news
and information has to be simplified and fed to us in bitesized
chunks, the People's Inquiry proved the absolute opposite.

More than seven hours of non-stop evidence being presented
and questioned, with no intervention from the floor, held an au-
dience captivated; and inspired them to fight on in support of
Lewisham Hospital and the NHS.

**We raised over £1,800 selling campaign merchandise
at the beginning of the Justice for Lewisham week.**

• A longer version of this article appears in the Workers' Liberty
newspaper *Solidarity*. See workersliberty.org/solidarity for the
full version.

