



Lewisham

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Hospital Worker

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

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Join the victory march!



The Save Lewisham Hospital campaign is organising a march to celebrate the victory at the High Court.

After we challenged the decision of

Jeremy Hunt to downgrade our A&E and maternity services, the judge found that Jeremy Hunt had acted illegally. He also said that David Cameron had lied when he claimed that no closures would go ahead without the support of local GPs.

The government is now appealing the decision of the High Court judge, which is even more reason to march to keep up the pressure on the government and the courts.

Whatever the result of appeal the struggle to save Lewisham Hospital and the NHS goes on. As healthworkers in the NHS we know that there are many things that we would change about the way the service operates at the moment. The court victory was just one battle in a much longer war to save the NHS from privatisation and cuts.

Ultimately, as long as our society is run by millionaires,

in the interests of the rich, then our NHS is under threat. But the journey to a more just world of equality, democracy and common ownership is a long one.

We should take time to mark the small victories on the way and celebrate every triumph of the little people over the masters of capital.

Save Lewisham Hospital Victory March

Saturday 14 September, 12pm, Loampit Vale Roundabout

More: savelewishamhospital.com

Tory cuts in figures

5,000 — nursing posts cut since 2010

£0.14 billion cost of 5,000 nurses salaries

£1.4 billion cost of redundancies since 2010 (mostly senior management)

2,200 — number of NHS bosses who pocketed the redundancy payout and then got themselves re-hired.

Nurses under stress

Almost two thirds of nurses have considered quitting their job this year due to stress and workload.

According to an RCN survey, 61% said that they had not been able to give the care that was needed due to cuts to services.

But surveys are not going to save the NHS. The RCN and the other unions should be organising a proportionate response to the attacks on nurses and the NHS.

The union leaderships should be leading the way in calling for civil disobedience and industrial action. Nothing will change unless we stand up for ourselves!

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. All articles are published anonymously and we will ensure confidentiality is upheld.

Email: hospitalworkerbulletin@gmail.com



Nurse Karl

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

What are unions for?

Dear Nurse Karl,
Having read your bulletin I thought I'd join a union. But the union membership form looked more like an advert for cheap car insurance company.

I think I should join anyway, because in times like this you don't know when you might need trade union representation.

But I don't see much evidence of the union wanting me to be active and fight the cuts.

Solidarity, Amil

Dear Amil,

You're right — Unison's latest recruitment campaign, offering "Essential Cover for Public Sector workers", presents union membership as a type of insurance.

This type of unionism sees members as passive "service users", who only involve themselves in the union when they get into trouble at work and need representation.

Unison is playing a dangerous game. Our right to representation is not something that was handed down to us from on high. Previous generations of workers won our right to representation on the picket line. If we are unable to defend these rights, through strikes and other forms of trade union action, then we will lose them.

Before we organised ourselves in unions, the bosses made up the rules as they went along — hiring and firing

at will, paying poverty wages, doing whatever they wanted to maximise their profits. The first unions waged militant struggles, striking for weeks on end to demand the contract of employment and right to collective bargaining.

Their victories civilised the workplace and led to significant improvements in working-class living standards. These rights that they won are now being eroded.

Unison's latest campaign presents the union as a kind of insurance company. Even if they are successful in recruiting people on this basis, even though they may have replenished the union coffers they will not have built an organisation that can defend workers' rights.

Of course we need union reps that have clever arguments, knowledge and negotiation skills to offer a decent representation service. But if our unions are not living, breathing organisations that can defend our interests in the workplace, then we may lose our right to representation altogether.

Whatever strategy and priorities are dominant in different unions, we still need to get organised and fight back against the cuts. If the unions are stale and conservative then we need to change them.

So my advice is to seek out the unions at the hospital and join the one that is most active, open, and democratic — because this will be the organisation that offers workers a real forum to make their collective voice heard.

Soldarity, Nurse Karl



Unions must be about more than individual representation and service provision...



Why merge?

You can't have missed it — the merger with QEh is all ready to go. It's happening because our management want it to happen. Jeremy Hunt likes mergers too, and the threat is that all

non-foundation Trusts will be forced to merge next year anyway.

Supporters of NHS mergers claim that they bring financial and clinical benefits. Jeremy Hunt believes he can make £4 billion savings for the NHS through mergers. However, all the evidence suggests the opposite.

A 2012 study by Bristol University found that mergers reduced capacity and increased waiting times with little or no effect on clinical productivity or quality. It also found that they had a negative effect on financial performance.

This is probably because bosses like to take the opportunity of a merger to make cutbacks. But attempts to avoid "duplication" by having one person work cross-sites mean that one person is now doing twice the work, as well as spending time in transit from one site to another. It's no wonder that such short sighted "cost cutting" ends up costing more, financially and clinically.

Mergers don't necessarily have to be like this. Lewisham is a small hospital, and staff and patients may benefit from being part of a larger organisation. The QEh has been run down — by

the failed merger into SLHT, by PFI debts, and now derailed further by the brutal TSA regime. It is in desperate need of some kind of normality; perhaps a merger with us could help.

Yet this merger is a huge danger for our hospital, we may be overwhelmed with the PFI debt that comes with QEh, and supporting our much neglected neighbour may drain our resources. We need to read every reorganisation document carefully, and get union reps to every re-org meeting. We need to be prepared to defend ourselves from the attacks that will happen in this process.

But we must also remember we are all part of the same NHS. We have a moral obligation to assist the staff and patients at the QEh. The fates of our two hospitals are bound up together, and as the managers at both sites huddle closer together around their mighty polished tables to see who of us they can pick off, we also need to be making the links, through our unions, with our brothers and sisters at the QEh. We need to get together and plan how we can make this merger work for us and our patients.

If the government win their appeal, then Jeremy and his flunkies will be back to leach the services from Lewisham to QEh as quick as you like. We'll need our colleagues in QEh to defend us, just as they need us now to help them recover from the living hell of the TSA regime.

We need to take this time, this opportunity to get to know our colleagues, because tomorrow we need to be ready to fight together.