



Lewisham

Issue 5 (17 January 2013)

Hospital Worker

A Workers' Liberty healthworkers' bulletin

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96% reject Kershaw's proposals

Matthew Kershaw (Trust Special Administrator) published his final recommendations as to the fate of South London Healthcare Trust (SLHT) and Lewisham Hospital last week.

There are no surprises. Despite 96% of respondents rejecting his plans he still recommends SLHT be dissolved, with services being taken over by other Trusts, and closing Lewisham Hospital A&E and Maternity Units. Kershaw's final recommendations have gone to Jeremy Hunt (Secretary of State for Health) who will make his formal decision on February 1 (though he is not required to make his decision public then).

Kershaw's report offers no realistic or rational answer as to where the 125,000 patient visits to Lewisham A&E will go or how the 4,365 births in Lewisham maternity unit (40% of which are defined as "high risk") will be adequately supported.

Kershaw was brought in last July when SLHT went into 'special measures' as spiraling PFI debts left the trust broke. His report is solely concerned with how to divert money away from health services and into paying off the extortionate PFI debt.

The report estimates 140 jobs will be cut as services are lost, others estimate this figure to be much greater. Kershaw's cuts will cost lives as all emergency services in the area are already overstretched and operating to full capacity. There are also other A&E services under threat in NW and SW London. The costs in human life could be significant. The only winners are the people making 1000% profits on the PFI debt and the private healthcare companies.

Axing services will also cost taxpayers huge sums of

money. Kershaw's accountants estimate the changes in SLHT and Lewisham will cost a staggering £1.093 billion to implement. It will cost £195 million over a 2-3 year period to 2015/16 to close down Lewisham A&E and maternity unit. Kershaw's report has just cost taxpayers £5 million to produce, most of which went to the already-well-lined pockets of management consultants, mainly McKinsey's. And less than two years ago the taxpayer forked out £12 million to build the new A&E at Lewisham.

Kershaw also recommends that £207 million of debt accumulated since the Trust was established in 2009 should be written off. With the DoH providing an extra £25 million a year to help continue to pay for PFI deals. Nowhere does Kershaw recommend that the PFI debts be cancelled allowing the three hospitals in SLHT to go about the business of healthcare.

These proposals for south London hospitals are as irrational for taking care of the sick and vulnerable as capitalism itself. They reflect the ideology of the government who from the onset have made it clear that the NHS is for breaking up and selling off to private profiteers.

If Hunt does back Kershaw's recommendations, as many expect he will, then we have to match his commitment to wreck the NHS with our need and desire to maintain, build on and improve the National Health Service. We have to fight for the very basic and founding principle of free health care for all at the point of need.

As the founder of the NHS, Nye Bevan said: "The NHS will exist as long as there are folk left to fight for it". We must organise and take that fight to the Tories.

Demonstrate on 26 January!

With only days to go before Hunt makes his decision on the fate of south London hospitals we will be marching to save Lewisham Hospital on Saturday 26 January.

Assemble midday on the grassy knoll opposite Lewisham DLR station, marching to Mountsfield Park for a rally, music, hot food, and unveiling of a 100ft petition.

• More: www.savelewishamhospital.com

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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The view from the ward

It's a common misconception that all the really urgent cases go to KCH or Tommys already anyway. There's a fair few that just wouldn't make it that far.

Although Lewisham officially is not geared up to deal with major traumas, ambulance crews have got to make an assessment, and if there's a good chance their patient will die in the ambulance before they get to Kings then they stop at Lewisham to stabilise them first. That sparkling new resus department is put to good use. For the really major traumas in Lewisham, transfer to Kings is often necessary, but the stop off prevents them dying on the way.

As it is those involved in major traumas don't generally realise that Lewisham's not the place to go when they walk, or get dragged in to A&E. This will still happen. There are lots of things about Lewisham that mean major traumas happen here. They'll carry on rocking up here and if the A&E/emergency surgery/ITU facilities no longer exist here, they're much more likely to die as a result of coming here.

Will Hunt save the day?



"Lower than vermin"

When founder of the NHS Nye Bevan described the Tories as "lower than vermin", he was thinking of people like the current Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt.

Hunt will make a decision on Kershaw's proposals on February 1st. His record does little to

reassure us that he will make the right decision.

The promotion of Jeremy Hunt to the position of Health Secretary in 2012 was a sign of the supreme confidence of David Cameron's administration and the contempt in which they held the electorate.

He made the headlines in 2011 as Rupert Murdoch's stooge in Parliament. His career break came after he told Chancellor George Osborne of his support for Rupert Murdoch's attempted takeover of BSkyB. He was quickly pro-

moted to oversee the BSkyB bid and did all he could to appease the world's largest media tycoon.

Hunt's conduct throughout this affair was very far from the free market principles that he prescribes for the NHS. When Murdoch's operation turned out to be full of phone-hacking sociopaths, Hunt's career looked likely to collapse.

However, like RBS, Hunt was "too big to fail". If Hunt was going to be blamed for his slavish devotion to Murdoch then Cameron's future would also be in question. So he was allowed to stay.

His recent promotion is David Cameron giving two fingers to everyone who believes in the NHS or, indeed, basic standards of human integrity.

ALARMING

On the NHS his record is alarming. In 2005 Hunt co-authored a book entitled *Direct Democracy*, which states: "Our ambition should be to break down the barriers between private and public provision, in effect denationalising the provision of healthcare in Britain".

In 2012 he helped this process along by lobbying his local NHS Trust in Surrey on behalf of Richard Branson.

NHS Surrey were stalling on a £650 million deal to hand seven hospitals and several community services to Branson's Virgin Group., The Trust were stalling because their risk assessment identified that such a massive transfer of management responsibility might put patients at risk. Hunt stepped in to speed up the deal.

Throughout his career he has used public office to help our his billionaire mates to the detriment of democracy.

There is a slim chance that our lively campaign in Lewisham has convinced him that we are more trouble than its worth. We must do all we can to give him hell before the 1st February.

But we must also bear in mind that the battle to save our hospital may run on for a long time yet.

Hospital Workers Group

The Hospital Workers Group is an ad hoc group of hospital workers that is meeting every week to organise campaign activity. Email lewishamhospitalworkers@gmail.com