

Save Whipps Cross Hospital Campaign

29 June 2007

www.savewhippscros.org



PREPARE FOR BATTLE: DATE SET FOR CONSULTATION

Public consultation on the future of Whipps Cross and King George's Hospitals is now planned for October 2007 – originally due early this year. The strength of the campaign to save Whipps Cross took the authorities by surprise with widespread opposition to proposals that include downgrading either Whipps or King George's or both to no more than a day care walk-in centre.

The need for Whipps Cross to continue as a strong, high-standard acute general hospital serving its community is being ever more firmly established. Following high-level visits NHS London is asking Whipps to present plans for new buildings. The campaign has called for the hospital's future to be confirmed now, and the £26 million "debt" that threatens more crippling cuts to be lifted (see page 2).

But the Fit for the Future review of hospitals continues and though things have now gone very quiet, behind the scenes much is going on.

Stakeholder meetings put keeping Whipps as a District General Hospital top – but an 'independent clinical review' of all 5 options including downgrading Whipps is about to start. Two doctors – top advisers to the government on NHS change – have been brought in: Sir George



Marching for Whipps: demonstrators at the big 3 February rally

Alberti, National Director for Emergency Access and Professor David Colin-Thome, National Clinical Director for Primary Care.

"Independent" of what? Alberti has already in an opening message told us the health service model we ought to have – and that those who want to protect local services by not having these changes "are misguided".

Remember: all proposed options mean 637 hospital beds lost to the Outer North East London region, with a

meagre £20 million put back in community services to replace the care.

And the huge £36 million a year cost of Queens PFI, the driving force for Fit for the Future review in the first place, has not gone away. Indeed it seems patients are already being diverted there.

The London-wide NHS review now under way will affect any proposals for our area. 'The Case for Change' published in March says London needs fewer hospital beds and general hospitals, and wants specialist services such as stroke care to be centralised into larger units, reducing costs.

We cannot sit back between now and October – or the shape of our health services will be determined by interests and individuals far removed from us. Health staff and community together must speak out for the health care we know is needed, joining people near and far also fighting for the future of our NHS.

Patients diverted from Whipps?

We are hearing stories of people who expected to be referred to Whipps, and would have preferred to, but have been sent to hospitals far away like Queens in Oldchurch, Romford.

Has this happened to you or to anyone you know? With the 'money

following the patient' funding system if lots of Whipps' patients are sent elsewhere the services at Whipps Cross could be cut, and no longer available as a choice.

Remember that you should be given an informed choice of five places – exercise it!

Cuts in the community

Cuts to our front-line community health services are threatening the health of future generations.

The "turnaround" process that cut millions in Whipps is now in the Primary Care Trust. Price Waterhouse Coopers is being paid £65,000 to cut £6 million, providing a turnaround director at a salary the PCT refuse to disclose (Whipps paid £1,500 a day for theirs last year). Services such as community nurses and therapists face £1.5 million in cuts.

All clinical vacancies have been frozen, continuing a freeze on health visitors, district nurses and school nurses in force for most of last year.

All services are under strain and exhaustion and sickness widespread. At one point, we hear, one auxiliary district nurse was covering the patch on her own where a regular staff of 7 have been reduced to 4.

In children's community services qualified health visitors who leave are not being replaced, so health screening of babies and young children and health promotion for families have reduced. Cases of post-natal depression have been missed, remaining undetected for months after the postnatal support groups were suspended. "With better staffing levels we were able to pick up problems much earlier and put in help and support," say health visitors.

Stopping the 8-month-old baby checks where their development is reviewed has already resulted in fewer referrals to the community paediatricians for children's health and development problems, storing up more serious problems for the future. When these checks were stopped in Tower Hamlets they had to be brought back when speech and language therapists were deluged with problems.

NHS BIRTHDAY RALLY, 5 JULY

Celebrate the birthday of the NHS at 7.00pm on Thursday 5 July at House of Commons Committee Room 14. Speaker include Wendy Savage, MP Frank Dobson, John Lister from London Health Emergency and Jackie Davis from the NHS Consultant's Association.

There will be reports from local campaigns, including the Save Whipps Cross Hospital Campaign.

Primary care managers have told Waltham Forest staff the market economy has come to the NHS, as services face possible takeover by private companies. Find out what's happening across the country in this Keep Our NHS Public Meeting.

'Drop the debt' call grows as more cuts loom

Whipps is now in financial balance, but another £7 million savings are being extorted this year, with a cut of £2.4 million spending on nursing staff. The savings are to pay a deficit of £26 million from past years, forcing Whipps to provide care with less than the minimum essential funding while the government claws back money allocated for our health care.

Staff are already working under intense pressure as they try to provide high standard care with over 300 fewer staff. Last year's "turn-around" cut 275 staff and slashed the use of agency staff. But the number of patients needing and receiving care from the hospital has changed little overall. In April more patients attended A&E than last year.

Save Whipps Cross campaign, with 33 other community organisations, called for the £26 million "debt" to be dropped, the hospital to be fully funded with the staff and modern buildings needed to fulfil its role as a DGH. A giant card with this message was presented to NHS London Chief Executive when she visited Whipps last month.

National Demonstration for the NHS

Saturday October 13 2007
Central London

We want a huge local contingent – spread the word and gather the numbers

Further details coming

The Save Whipps campaign



The campaign has one simple aim: to keep Whipps serving the local community as a fully funded and functioning general hospital, working within a local NHS system that provides good health care for everyone.

Our members are nurses, doctors, consultants, health workers, patients, and members of the general public. Members come from all sections of the community and across the political spectrum, united by the common cause.

For more details, email info@savewhippscross.org, or see www.savewhippscross.org.