

Save Whipps

Keep up the fight

The Save Whipps Cross Hospital Campaign has won a temporary reprieve for the hospital. A decision on its future has been postponed pending a review of London wide hospital provision by NHS London in the autumn.

The Fit For the Future group that is conducting the review of the future of Whipps has been forced to accept the case for its retention as a district general hospital due to the overwhelming support of the local community highlighted by the massive demo through Waltham Forest in February.

However, this is likely to be no more than tactical retreat. Whipps' enemies in the local NHS bureaucracy will be hoping that it will be easier to attack the hospital by hiding behind a regional review. Everyone that cares about Whipps and the NHS in general needs to keep up the pressure.

The financial position of the hospital remains desperate, despite the recent announcement by Health Minister Patricia Hewitt that indebted hospitals such as Whipps will not face further penalties in the next financial year.

Closure

Wards and operating theatres continue to face closure and patients and staff face continuing stress and uncertainty due to a Government-imposed accounting regime more appropriate to a private company than a public health service.

Campaigners are demanding that NHS London to make an early public statement confirming the future of the hospital. It is calling for the entire £27 million deficit to be written off and for new investment to be provided to fund the urgently needed modernisation of the hospital buildings.

National save the NHS demo

The UNISON health workers' union has called a national demonstration in defence of the NHS in London on 13 October.

Local campaigns and other trade unions are invited to take part in what needs to be a major show of opposition to the Government's attacks on our NHS. Members of the public from all sections of the community and across the political spectrum, who care about the NHS, need to join health workers to send the clearest possible message to the government

Community health care under attack

On top of the threat to Whipps, community health care in the borough is also under attack.

Waltham Forest Primary Care Trust (PCT) is replacing health visitors and school nurses with less qualified and therefore less well paid staff, thereby diluting the quality of service.

Job freezes have meant that health visitors have had to cut some of their health promotion work and routine child health screening. Paediatricians have already noticed a marked decrease in the referral of children with developmental difficulties, meaning that children with problems will not be picked up and offered therapy until a much later stage. We want to ensure that every "drop-in" Child Health Clinic in Waltham Forest stays open for families to use.

Waltham Forest PCT have advertised for private organisations to put in bids for the service which manages patients with "long-term conditions".

This service is run very well at present by a combination of community and hospital based services. The PCT

plans to gradually contract out more and more of the community services.

Why is our NHS in such a mess?

Government ministers frequently boast about the amount of money they have ploughed into the NHS since 1997.

If that is the case why is our NHS in such a mess? It is certainly true that expenditure on health care has increased substantially since the late 1990s. However, much of this money is going into the NHS only to go straight back out again into the pockets of fat cat privateers.

The Government has privatised NHS direct which bulk purchases health supplies for the NHS and the first fully privately run NHS hospital has just opened in Lymington in Hampshire.

Billions have been poured into hospitals built by private contractors under the Private Finance Initiative which is much more costly than projects directly funded from the public purse. Many PFI hospitals leave NHS Trusts saddled with enormous debts that have to be paid back at the expense of patient care.

On top of this the Government has encouraged the outsourcing of treatment to so called Independent Sector Treatment Centres that unlike NHS facilities get paid from our taxes us whether they carry out treatment or not.

Keep Our NHS Public is fighting for and end to all forms of marketisation and privatisation and for a fully funded, publicly provided and publicly controlled national health service.

About Keep Our NHS Public

Keep Our NHS Public is a grass roots coalition of groups united by a desire to defend a public health service against privatisation and cuts.

I want to keep in touch

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