

# Workers Weekly

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## UNITE TO SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE OF THE NHS!



- Statement of Workers' Weekly Health Group, November 3, 2007 -

**T**oday's demonstration is extremely significant, as a national demonstration organised by the working class movement to defend the NHS. It is a coming together of the many struggles of the health workers and patients who are fighting to save their hospitals and health service. It is a demonstration by people already in motion against redundancies and hospital closures and a chance to join together in fighting the whole anti-social programme. It is a very important chance for people not just to join in fighting for their own hospital, but to unite together to oppose the whole "investment with reform" modernisation plan.

### Issues facing health workers and the people at this time

The attack on health care and farming out services to private multinationals is another way of paying the rich. At the same time, the government is using the crisis to attack health workers and using the media to try and divide and rule. For example, they are using the issue of hospital infections to blame nurses and domestics instead of health workers themselves uniting to find solutions. No health worker enters a job in the NHS to cause harm, but under

the current constant cutbacks in funding health workers are suffering stress because they cannot deliver the standard of health care that they want to.

It is so important that health workers stand up for a health service which is run by them for the benefit of patients and the whole of society. Despite the NHS announcing a "surplus" of nearly £1bn, the reality for health workers is continued pressure on hospital and community services to manage and less and less resources. For example, Whipps Cross closed a 12-bedded ward last July and now as the weather gets colder it is on red alert virtually every day. The trust has a plan to save just under £1 million from the nursing budget, amongst other cost-cutting plans. This is not to get the trust into financial balance – it is already running "in balance" – but to generate £4.6 million "surplus" that the DoH want paid back into their coffers.

The need for hospital care and emergency admission is just as great in the local community, but the resources to provide it are constantly squeezed. District nurses, health visitors, school nurses are all facing reorganisation of their services to cut staff and severely change the proportion of senior qualified nurses to

junior and support staff. There is a policy of downskilling, deprofessionalisation, and blatant exploitation of health staff. Staff are seeing the service to which they have committed often years of their working lives being devalued and disintegrated. Support staff are desperately anxious for their patients as they do their best but fear they are having to act beyond their qualification. Patients are not getting the level of care they are entitled to and clinical risk increases.

The strategy people can see is to create a cheap-labour disempowered workforce, ready for handing over to some multinational from the private health industry who have their sights on the polyclinics advocated in the Darzi review.

What is the logic of moving expensive diagnostic equipment into health centres or polyclinics if they already exist in hospitals whilst removing the very services that need to be in the community? The answer is that the cynical interests of multinationals to get hold of the British and European NHS and other public health services' health market are dictating strategy.

### Call of Workers' Weekly Health Group

WWHG calls on health work-

ers and the whole of the working class and people to refuse to accept the direction for our health service that is being set by government and implemented by the local trusts. As health workers, we are the front line of defence of our NHS and health care for our people. When we decide to stand up for our services, and join with the community, health service user and patient groups, local community activists and other bodies that care about our health service – this has tremendous power.

We need to stand by our own convictions, work closely with everyone who wants to stand up for the health service, build unity on this common objective, challenge the plans on every level, in every arena, and get into the detailed arguments, and expose the hidden or not so hidden agendas of privatisation. We need to put on the main agenda the health service that is actually needed, what will improve public health, reduce health inequalities.

WWHG calls on health workers to unite with patients to safeguard the future of the NHS and stop the government using health care to pay the rich. It is our NHS and it is we who should decide its future!

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# Thousands Turn Out to Save Bridlington Hospital



Over 3,000 people marched through the streets of Bridlington on Saturday, October 20, in the largest demonstration yet by health workers, supporters of the hospital and patients to keep vital services open at Bridlington Hospital.

Protesters turned out in force over the Trust's plans to close the Cardiac Monitoring Unit and two acute medical wards at Bridlington Hospital which the health workers and their unions have consistently said will put

patient's lives at risk. The fear is that, if these services are allowed to close, the 22 mile distance patients will have to travel to Scarborough hospital for emergency treatment could prove fatal.

Kevin Coyne, Unite National Officer for Health, who addressed the rally said: "Unite are delighted to support the 'Save Bridlington Hospital Campaign' and the 3,000 strong turnout demonstrates local resident's concern about the threatened closure of these vital services at

Bridlington hospital.

"Unite will continue to work with our members and local residents to defend these services. We are urging the Chief Executive to rethink the closure plan and everyone in Bridlington to continue to lobby their MP."

Unite Regional Officer, Terry Cunliffe, who also attended the rally said: "The massive turnout shows the massive support the hospital has as the local residents fear the closure of these critical wards and the Cardiac Monitoring Unit could put their own and their families' lives at risk.

"People believe they have been misled by the trust and their support shows that they will not stand by and let these closures go ahead without a fight."

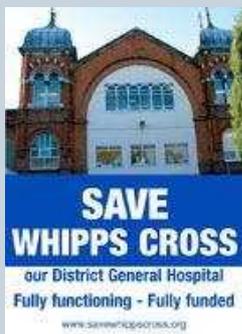
Unite officials have a meeting planned with the Trust next week to discuss the ongoing consultation which ends in March 2008. (source: Unite)

# Rally to Oppose the Closure of A&E at St Richard's Hospital Chichester

A rally was held on Saturday, October 27, to oppose the closing of the Accident and Emergency units at the St Richard's Hospital in Chichester. Reportedly 15,000 people took part in the demonstration and rally afterwards where speakers stated their views. Banners included that of Portsmouth Pensioners Association.

Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones spoke passionately on the need to keep the units open. The cathedral at Chichester could care for your spiritual needs but St Richard's was for the here and now, was one of the comments he made. Other well-known people from the world of acting spoke, such as Patricia Routledge (known for her portrayal of Hyacinth Bouquet). (source: Ryde & East Wight Trades Union Council)

# Whipps Cross Should Remain Full Acute Hospital



The national emergency access director has recommended that Whipps Cross University Hospital trust should remain a full acute hospital.

Professor Sir George Alberti made the recommendation alongside a series of other suggested next steps in his clinical case for change published as part of the Fit for the Future

review into healthcare services in north east London.

As a result of Sir George's review, NHS London has decided to put the consultation on major service change on hold until further work, including improvements in hospital and out of hospital care, is achieved.

(source: Health Service Journal, October 10, 2007)

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