

Campaigners tell Health Secretary “Hands Off Our NHS!” - PRESS RELEASE 27/04/2018

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY – banners, placards and a government minister. For further information call James Beecher 07734 058789

Campaigners are preparing to give Jeremy Hunt a Stroud welcome, with the Health Secretary due to visit Stroud Hospital at 1.30pm.

Campaigners from Stroud Against the Cuts, Keep Gloucestershire’s NHS Public and other groups plan to rally at Stroud Hospital from 1pm to greet Hunt with their questions and concerns. Members of the Hands Off Lydney and Dilke hospitals campaign – currently planning legal action against plans to close the hospitals [\[i\]](#) – will also attend. Expressing surprise that Mr Hunt would want to visit Stroud – a town known for successful campaigns to save the local Maternity Unit [\[ii\]](#) and prevent privatisation of community health services [\[](#)

[iii\]](#)

– campaigners say they are keen to ask Hunt about a number of local issues of concern:

- **Why are our patient transport ambulances run by private Arriva?**

- **Why is our 111 service run by private company and Tory donors Care UK?**

- **Why are the Forest of Dean equivalents of Stroud Hospital – Lydney and Dilke – set to be closed?**

- Why is Stroud's Minor Injury Unit now closed at night?
- Why are patients waiting up to a year for hospital referrals?

A [Facebook page for the event](#) suggests, at time of writing, that 75 people may be in attendance. A [tweet about the event](#) has been shared 119 times.

NHS campaigner with Stroud Against the Cuts, Caroline Molloy said:

“Next month Jeremy Hunt will become the longest serving Health Secretary – there’s no else he can blame for the crisis in the NHS that’s occurring under his watch. Hunt has recently watered down or scrapped targets for timely NHS treatment – thousands of patients in Gloucestershire and hundreds of thousands around the country see their conditions worsen while they wait. Thanks to the ‘Hostile Environment’ in the NHS we’re even seeing people who’ve lived in the country for years told they can’t access the NHS. [\[iv\]](#)”

Chair of Stroud Against the Cuts James Beecher said:

“We’ve had enough Hunt’s lies – the cuts, closures, the privatisation. We don’t want Hunt coming here to pose for photo opportunities and pretending he cares when the reality is that with him as Health Secretary the NHS has experienced its worst ever funding squeeze. Yet at the same time somehow private health providers are receiving more than 4 times more NHS cash than they were a decade ago, with Arriva taking over our local patient transport and Care UK running 111 and Out of Hours care. Hospitals, particularly small hospitals and A&E departments are closing or downgrading as we see in the Forest of Dean and at Cheltenham, and indeed Stroud Hospital’s own Minor Injuries Unit. As NHS services are scaled back, private health firms are swooping in.”

Notes for editors and links after the "Read more" button

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Jeremy Hunt became Health Secretary on [4 September 2012](#) . Since February he's been in the post longer than the founder of the NHS, Aneurin Bevan – and he's set to become the longest-serving health secretary

[\[v\]](#)

The number of patients not receiving treatment within 18 weeks of referral has gone up by 100,000 since January 2016 [\[vi\]](#) and locally, people have been told they may wait up to a year. Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said “there had been an increase of nearly nine per cent, or about 7,000, patients waiting for non-urgent elective care between 2013 and 2016.” [\[vii\]](#) Meanwhile, Hunt has signalled he doesn't think most people need to be treated within 4 hours at A&E.

Gloucestershire's patient transport ambulances were handed to private company Arriva to run on the 1st December 2013. The company were given a 5-year contract till 30 November 2018, but their performance has been repeatedly under question. The company has regularly missed targets to drop patients off between 45 minutes earlier than booked arrival time and 15 minutes later than booked arrival time, and left elderly people crying in Gloucestershire waiting rooms. [\[viii\]](#)

Since 2010, 15,000 beds have been cut from hospitals – which amounts to one in ten beds being lost [\[ix\]](#) . Here in Gloucestershire, plans to close The Dilke and Lydney hospitals in the

Forest of Dean could see them replaced with half the number of existing beds. [\[x\]](#)

Thanks to a government NHS pay freeze, nurses pay has fallen by 14% since 2010 [\[xi\]](#) - and the impact on morale and retention, as well as the cuts to recruitment and nursing bursaries, means that in some parts of England only 1 in every 400 nursing places are being filled.

[\[xii\]](#)

A shortage of nurses was behind the reduction in opening hours at Stroud's Minor Injuries unit implemented in 2016

[\[xiii\]](#)

. Cheltenham A&E is among a host of units around the country that have been downgraded since 2010.

[\[xiv\]](#)

According to a parliamentary answer given by Minister of State Stephen Barclay of the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS commissioners' spend on non-NHS bodies was £2,193 million in 2006/07, and had risen to £9,007 million by 2016/17. [\[xv\]](#)

References:

[\[i\]](#) “ [Campaigners raise enough money to hire lawyers to halt the closure of the Forest's community hospitals](#) ”, Gloucestershire Live.

[\[ii\]](#) “ [10 years on - the day Stroud Maternity and Dilke hospitals were saved](#) ”, Gloucestershire Live.

[\[iii\]](#) “ [England: Campaign to save Gloucestershire's NHS](#) ” – podcast on successful campaign by People's Health Movement North America.

[iv] [“ Irial Eno: The case of Albert Thompson is abhorrent, but not exceptional ”](#), The BMJ.

[v] [“ Top 10 longest-serving health secretaries ”](#), GP online

[vi] [“ NHS 'waving white flag' as it axes 18-week waiting time operation target ”](#), The Guardian.

[vii] [“ Patient told hospital waiting list 'is 52 weeks' as bosses admit 'it's not good enough' ”](#), Gloucestershire Live.

[viii] [Non-Emergency Patient Transport Update to HCOSC](#)

[March 2017 \(pdf\)](#), [““ An elderly man cried in the waiting room because he just wanted to get back to his bed ””](#).

[ix] [“ NHS breaking point now 'the norm' as 15,000 beds are cut in six years ”](#), The Telegraph.

[x] [“ Residents reject plan to close two Forest of Dean hospitals ”](#), BBC Gloucestershire.

[xi] [“ NHS pay rise: Are there strings attached? ”](#), BBC.

[xii] [“ Parts of NHS England only able to fill one in 400 nursing vacancies ”](#), The Guardian.

[xiii] [“ New opening hours at Stroud Minor Injuries Unit come into force next week ”](#), Stroud News and Journal.

[xiv] “ [The list of 66 A&E and maternity units being hit by cuts](#) ”, The Telegraph

[xv] “ [Spending on private health providers by NHS commissioners in the last 10 years](#) ”, tweet by Health Services Journal reporter Lawrence Dunhill.