

Minutes from Health Campaigns Together meeting, London, Saturday 19 March

> = action point

1. Attendance and apologies

> Keith Venables has full list of attendance and apologies – this section to be amended.

Apologies: Stella Vig, Steve Smith, Elizabeth Cotton

Present: Yannis Gourtsoyannis (BMA junior doctors), Tony Cannam (Momentum HQ), Louise Irvine (SLH, NHAP, BMA Council), Mike Campbell (Bristol Protect the NHS), John Lister, John Lipetz (SHA, Camden KONP), Merril Hammer and Jim Grealley (Save our Hospitals Hammersmith and Charing Cross), Sacha Ismail (Momentum NHS), Keith Venables (KONP), Vivien Giladi, Olly Kirby and Laurie Laybourn-Langton (Bring Back the NHS project), Claire Gerada (Hurley Group)

2. Ongoing work

a. “Bring Back the NHS” initiative

Laurie Laybourn-Langton and Ollie Kirby (event organisers) reported: Following a successful rally/event in 2015, before the general election, the plan is to organise a similar, but hopefully bigger event in 2017. The proposed venue is the O2 Arena. There will also be discussions about events around the country in the run up to the London rally.

> They will be drafting an outline “scoping document” soon which can be discussed at the next HCT meeting, including to provide clear political content/messaging.

b. Junior doctors’ and student health workers’ fights

Yannis Gourtsoyannis (BMA) reported: BMA Junior Doctors Committee met on 18 March and agreed by big majority to escalate by replacing two 48 hours strikes agreed in April (6-8 and 26-28) with more radical action. This will take the form either of more days or of including a full walkout. The basic aim is to pressure trusts to cancel more elective/consultant work so the strike can have a greater impact.

There is also a push for a judicial review under way, which the BMA is not directly organising but is supporting.

Lastly, there are now talks with the TUC about the latter organising a demonstration in support of the doctors and their strike actions, as well as other NHS issues including student bursaries and the general future of the health service. Important demo explicitly supports strikes.

> Yannis stressed that the most important thing is for organisations and people to mobilise for as many picket lines as possible.

> Keith has produced a model leaflet for the public in support of the doctors and will circulate so that local groups etc can use/adapt.

c. London mayoral election

John Lister reported.

> He will be producing a leaflet for NHS campaigners to use at London election events, setting out what we should be demanding of candidates on health.

> Clare Gerada is setting up a Doctors for Sadiq (Khan). Agreed that Sadiq Khan is so far weak on NHS and this should put demands on Khan including opposition to hospital closures, real democratic consultation and control and opposition to imposed local pseudo-devolution, more funding for public health, and a strong stance on the social determinants of ill health, eg housing.

> Louise Irvine is standing for the London Assembly on the National Health Action Party

ticket. John will send her and Clare notes to help with their activities in different party-political arenas.

d. Trade union links

John Lister reported.

Both the successful HCT conference and the junior doctors' strikes have had a positive impact on union support for NHS campaigning and HCT's work.

At the moment unions seem keener on regional events than a national trade union/NHS conference. John has been working with unions in Yorkshire for on a local NHS demo on 16 April. One of the Wakefield-based NHS Unison branches will be organising an ongoing initiative, including a northern regional conference in the summer. (9 July? Suggested might want to revisit date due to Durham miners' gala clash.) Sacha reported that there is also a local Newcastle/NE demo on 9 April.

Unite and Unison will contribute columns to the next issue of the HCT paper, out in April (see below). They are also engaged with John in useful/productive discussions about NHS policy, including the NHS Bill.

HCT has been given a stall at Unison health conference, 25-27 April in Brighton.

Lastly, there is the possibility of some funding for our activities from TUC unions.

Sacha Ismail, Tony O'Sullivan and Louise Irvine reported on the upcoming (21 March) strike by cleaning and catering workers at the SLaM mental health trust in South London, including in Lewisham.

> John will arrange people to cover the stall at Unison health and arrange the submission of a funding bid to the unions. He will keep us updated on further progress.

> Sacha proposed a resolution in support of the SLaM workers, which was adopted unanimously. To be put on the HCT website and out to our affiliates and contacts – after Sacha checks text with GMB rep (urgently, obviously).

“Health Campaigns Together statement in support of South London and Maudsley trust/Aramark workers on strike, 21 March

“The NHS campaigns network Health Campaigns Together sends its support and solidarity to the GMB members at SLaM striking on 21 March to win a £10p/h minimum wage, sick pay and unsocial hours payments from Aramark. We support your battle for better terms and conditions, and we also believe that health workers' struggles are crucial to protecting, saving and rebuilding the NHS. We call on our affiliated organisations, all labour movement and health campaigning organisations, and all supporters of the NHS, to actively back your campaign.

“Congratulations on your action, and solidarity.”

v. Finances

John Lister reported. The conference cost £2375 pounds, and with the cost of the first issue of the HCT paper, went into debt. However, with takings from conference and donations from various sources we are covering costs and now moving back towards balance.

The aim is for our operations, including the paper, to be self-financing.

Tony O'Sullivan reported on the costs of the 11 March day of action in support of the NHS Bill. He is working on getting agreed donations in to cover the costs.

> The deadline for articles to the new issue of the HCT paper is 4 April. Articles or proposals for articles to John.

> John is working on setting up a bank account. He proposed the following motion, which was agreed unanimously.

* Motion on finances, passed at Health Campaigns Together meeting on Saturday 19 March

1. We agree to nominate John Lister and Tony O'Sullivan as signatories to the new HCT bank account.

2. We agree to elect additional signatories, who will sign up as signatories today [Keith Venables elected]

3. We empower signatories to agree an outline constitution, dated today, as the basis to facilitate a bank account.
4. We require John Lister to report on finances in and out up to date at the next HCT meeting on 23 April.

3. Workshops on NHS Bill and on the Labour Party

The meeting broke into two working groups and then reported back.

Action points from NHS Bill discussion

- > The NHS Bill campaign is aiming to bring the Bill back in some form next year. They are looking for a Labour MP to do this. Tony O'Sullivan liaising with them.
- > Tony to take lead on producing an updated fact sheet/set of arguments about why the Bill is necessary, aimed at Labour Party people.
- > It is also necessary to discuss again what are core elements of Bill, and what can be changed without watering down the basic substance.
- > Tony O'S will also write an article on all this for the next paper. Tony is taking lead on this – please contact him. He has extensive notes on key arguments from this discussion.

Action points from Labour Party discussion

- > Momentum's steering committee has agreed to launch a Momentum campaign on the NHS. Keith, Tony O'S and John Lipetz will liaise with Sacha, Tony Cannam and Jill Mountford on how HCT can work with Momentum to help them on this. HCT to publish the resolution passed at the Momentum steering meeting.
- > Sacha to send Keith the 2012 Labour Party conference policy, which is far from perfect stronger than what the Labour health team are saying, to be circulated.
- > Sacha to circulate letter on Labour support for the NHS Bill from Bristol health campaigners which Mike Campbell has sent him, plus similar initiatives from Sheffield and Barnet campaigners, so they can be published.
- > Yannis to liaise with Sacha to work focus on Labour into getting TUC to launch demo in support of BMA.
- > Sacha to put Tony O'S and Tony C in touch with Momentum NHS people who agreed to work on getting more Labour MPs on board, so they can cooperate.
- > Crucial point: Sacha to lead working group on producing motion for CLP, including Tony C, John Lipetz, Yannis, Vivien Giladi, Mike, John Lister and Keith Venables, plus some others working on this who were not at meeting. Aim to get draft together in next two weeks.
- > Also crucial: go from there to produce outlines of what will become contemporary resolution to go to LP conference. There was discussion about whether non-contemporary resolutions can be submitted. [Sacha checked after meeting: apart from documents from the party National Policy Forum and statements submitted by the NEC, and rule changes ie constitutional changes, all motions submitted ie all policy motions from CLPs must be "contemporary" and submitted after 1 August. But that is no reason not to work on substance of motion now.]
- > Sacha to write article for paper on all this.

> Both groups discussed the 13 April meeting with John McDonnell. Tony O'S to lead on making sure there is a clear agenda for that meeting, including by organising a pre-meeting.

5. Looking forward – general discussion on “Sustainability and Transformation” in NHS and other issues

John reported and there was extensive discussion. Action points:

- > Additional point: Tony O'S has extensive notes on the transformation that is going on. Should he write up?

- > We aim to make the HCT website a port of call for information and analysis of all kinds of issues about where the NHS is going. It is important that affiliates read, republish and circulate content from the website, as well as submitting content.
- > We should use the fact there is yet another reorganisation of the NHS under way to undermine pseudo-arguments against the NHS Bill.
- > Question of campaigning around/with GPs: agreed to revisit at next meeting.
- > Mike reported from Bristol. They are fighting very actively against the removal of a clause which prevents the CCG from awarding contracts to companies that engage in tax avoidance. Similar clauses exist in about ten CCGs. The issue has wide significance since many companies pushing for NHS contracts do tax dodge, eg Virgin Care. Agreed HCT would cover this fight and the wider issue of tax avoidance more extensively, including in the new issue of paper.
- > Save Lewisham Hospital are in touch with the Huddersfield A&E campaign.

6. 16 April People's Assembly demo

Tony O'S will get the banner to the demo, where John Lipetz will be responsible for carrying/displaying it. They will work together on making sure we have people to do that.

7. Next meeting

Saturday 23 April, London, venue tbc

Agreed to appoint the following to convene the meeting, produce agenda in advance and generally carry work forward: Tony O'Sullivan, Louise Irvine, Merrill Hammer, Keith Venables.

Merril raised the issue of under-representation of female NHS campaigners in HCT meetings/organising, and of general under-representation of BME people in NHS campaigning. Agreed to discuss this at future meeting.

8. Other business

Louise reported that in addition to upcoming junior doctors and general BMA conferences, the BMA is organising an emergency conference along the lines of an "NHS crisis submit", Tuesday 3 May, in London.

Tony C asked for ideas on what Momentum should focus on getting so far relatively unengaged members of the public to do. Agreed to discuss next time.

Not discussed this time: London Marathon, Facebook