

Fighting for mental health

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Our local hospital in Brighton has just lost its only inpatient detox ward. This has happened because our community substance misuse services were outsourced and the local council did not understand that that budget also paid for the inpatient ward. 14 staff have left the service, others have been transferred to the private company in Surrey and now have uncapped caseloads.

What can we do about this? I have these steps to address the mental health crisis:

1. **Connect** – we need to connect the people locally to the people who are making these decisions. Our CCG has just awarded a contract to Optum of £1.5 million. They did no consultation. Optum are a subsidiary of United Health. We have linked the people's opinions to the CCGs. If they don't consult, we will do it for them. We have 90% of 1500 people who responded saying they do not want Optum in the local health economy. We are organising an event at Brighton University and the CCG is coming, as are the local council. We are going to present this to them. We have to bring the people – who do not want the NHS cut – to the CCG. We are also doing it through the press.
2. **Be active** – get ahead of the game. We respond to cuts, we respond to privatisations with regard to mental health and other topics. We need to find out what is upcoming and do that consultation again for these people. So we can go back to the CCG and say 95% of people in this city do not want this to be a private service. We put it in the press. We make it more difficult for that to happen.
3. **Be mindful** – we have a tendency to work in silos: the campaigners against the CCGs, the campaigners against political parties. There are good people on the councils, there are good people on the CCGs and we have to make links with them where we can.
4. **Give to others** – There are lots of stories of what's happening. This is important. We need to collect stories, as many stories as we can, get them in the press, and tell people how our friends and families are suffering.

We are going to get these steps through linking the public through decision makers working together effectively. If we don't, people are going to die.