

Press Release 01/07/2016 - Stroud Against the Cuts

Campaigners to celebrate 68th birthday of NHS

What: Celebratory gathering with 1940s music, open mic for tributes and speeches, facepainting, 'NHS colours' theme

Where: Pocket Park, next to Trinity Hall, opposite Stroud Hospital

When: 6-8pm Tuesday 5th July, photo-call 6.30pm

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Following a weekend of events exploring the past, present and future of the NHS held at Stroud Valleys Artspace last week, community group Stroud Against the Cuts are holding a small gathering to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the NHS on 5th July 1948, and are inviting people to attend to share stories of their experiences

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The event comes as the overnight closure of the Minor Injuries Unit at Stroud Hospital, and parking fines at Beeches Green Health clinic are regular features in local news, and as questions arise over whether funding for the NHS will increase as hinted by the successful Vote Leave campaign.

Earlier this year, NHS doctors took historically unprecedented strike action and Gloucestershire has recently seen the A&E at Cheltenham downgraded, non-emergency ambulances handed over to private company Arriva to manage, and some NHS pharmacy services now handed to Lloyds Pharmacy. Nationally, waiting lists are up and there are widespread stories of access to and quality of treatment declining.

James Beecher, one of Stroud Against the Cuts organisers' said: "On the NHS's birthday we'll be celebrating its founding principles and its importance to healthcare provision. It is necessary to have a health system that enables access to healthcare when you need it, provided by well-trained, well-rewarded workers. We want a health system that provides comprehensive, high quality care – promptly and universally, and paid for in the fairest way – through progressive taxation. To be affordable, such a system will need to be publicly owned and run – which is far more efficient. All of this has been under threat in recent decades, but it has rarely been more important than now that we come together to defend and extend the NHS."

Recently the group held a weekend of events featuring international

health policy expert John Lister, a Corporate Watch workshop on researching the private companies taking over the NHS, and advice for health and social care workers, as well as film screenings, music and comedy. Stroud Against the Cuts led a successful campaign in 2011/12 to defend local community health services from privatisation, and is set to launch a petition against the parking fines and arrangements at Beeches Green.