

NHS campaigners to rally at Stroud Hospital - Press Release 22/08/2016

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Organisers Stroud Against the Cuts to be joined by District and County Councillors from the Labour, Green, and Liberal Democrat Parties at Stroud Hospital from 7pm on Monday 22nd August.

· Battle against withdrawal of 24 hour opening at Minor Illness and Injuries Units (MIUs) in Stroud and Cirencester, reduction in opening hours at MIUs in the county

· Campaigners worried about future of urgent care and other health services in the county as NHS faces multi-billion funding gap and increasing privatisation

Campaigners from community group Stroud Against the Cuts – who successfully fought to prevent Gloucestershire’s community health services being privatised in 2011/12 [\[1\]](#) – will hold a rally outside Stroud Hospital on Monday night 7-8pm

[\[2\]](#)

as part of ongoing campaigns to ‘defend the NHS’. The latest event is spurred by plans to withdraw 24 hour opening of the MIUs in Stroud and Cirencester and reduce opening hours at MIUs in the Forest of Dean.

[\[3\]](#)

Gloucestershire Care Services, which runs seven district hospitals in the county, is asking people to choose between 3 options – each of which will see Stroud and Cirencester MIUs close at 8 or 11pm. Stroud League of Friends are recommending Option 2, which would keep Stroud MIU open from 8am until 11pm. David Miller, Chairman of Stroud Hospital League of Friends, said in a letter to the Stroud New and Journal: “Ideally we would like to continue opening for 24 hours but if this is unacceptable then at least until midnight.”

[\[4\]](#)

Meanwhile, over 1,000 people have signed Stroud Labour Party’s petition to “[Ensure 24 hour, urgent care is provided at the Minor Injuries Unit at Stroud Hospital](#)

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[\[5\]](#)

People attending the rally will hear from members of a variety of organisations and political parties. As well as James Beecher from Stroud Against the Cuts and regional officer for Unite the Union Jo Galaska, speakers will include Dursley Cllr Doina Cornell from the Labour Party - Stroud District Council's representative on Gloucestershire County Council's Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Stroud County Councillor Sarah Lunnon (Green Party), and Cllr Joe Harris, Liberal Democrat County Councillor for Cirencester – who has collected 1,484 signatures on a petition to “ [Keep Cirencester Hospital open overnight](#) ”.

James Beecher, spokesperson for Stroud Against the Cuts said: “The proposed cuts in opening hours at MIUs in Gloucestershire including Stroud are the latest example of government attacks on our healthcare services. We fear for the future of local healthcare services. We're holding this rally not only to challenge the MIU changes across the county but to highlight the crisis the government is causing in the NHS and to begin organising to resist the dramatic changes to come as local health bosses work behind closed doors on their plan to deliver Gloucestershire's share of £22 billion of cuts. We worry that our Out of Hours care and community health services could end up in the hands of a private company - like local non-emergency patient transport. Services must have enough well-trained staff to provide high-quality care but the government seems intent on making staff shortages worse with pay cuts, attacks on junior doctors, and the scrapping of nurse training bursaries.”

Stroud Labour Party Vice-Chair Debbie Hicks said: “Closing this vital service for the community overnight will only put more pressures on NHS services at the A&E at Gloucestershire Royal. This is a local service that local people rely on heavily. We must do all we can to make sure patients in Stroud have access to care 24 hours a day.” [\[6\]](#)

Promoting the Cirencester petition, Cllr Harris “This will move will have an negative effect on vulnerable people in particular who struggle to get around, one resident told me the other day that due to staff shortages at the hospital she had to pay £70 for a taxi to Gloucester.”

Notes for Editors:

¹ Stroud Against the Cuts was formed in 2010. With other anti-cuts groups in Gloucestershire, it campaigned successfully against plans to hand Gloucestershire's community health services to a private company (a so-called 'social enterprise') or conduct a competitive tendering exercise over who would run the services. Across the South West, handovers of similar services to 'social enterprises' did take place. Peninsula Community Health (PCH) - one such body - [announced it would not extend its contract](#) in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, blaming a 'challenging financial climate', and more recently it has emerged that [Virgin are set to take over these services in Bath and North East Somerset](#) – from social enterprise Sirona which has run the services since 2011..

[2] A [Facebook page for the NHS rally](#) suggests at least 50 people will attend.

[3] The proposals form part of a 'Review of Minor Injuries and Illness Units in Gloucestershire' that is being conducted by Gloucestershire Care Services (GCS). You can download/read the booklet online in pdf form: [MIIU information booklet \(pdf\)](#). The booklet outlines the reasons for change to the existing services and the three options to be discussed. 'Discussions with the public' will take place till 31st August, with a final decision being made by the NHS Trust at its board meeting on 20th September 2016. GCS say that feedback received will be compiled into an outcome report and used to inform a new operating model for MIIUs that will begin on 1st October 2016.

[4] [Stroud Hospital League of Friends's letter](#) is available on the Stroud News and Journal website.

[5] 494 people have signed the [online version of the Stroud MIIU petition](#) at time of writing, with the total number including signatures on paper versions reaching 1,095 by the afternoon of Saturday 20th.

[6] " [Save Our Minor Injuries Unit](#) ", published on www.stroudlabour.org.uk , 29th July 2016.

