

STROUD CAMPAIGNERS AMONG HUNDREDS AT MARCH FOR THE NHS IN CHELTENHAM

Written by Administrator
Tuesday, 15 March 2016 13:26 -

PRESS RELEASE – STROUD AGAINST THE CUTS – 15/03/2016

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· **250 people March through streets of Cheltenham on Saturday 12th March to support strike action by Junior Doctors**

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· **Protest comes as polling shows 66% of the public support strike action by Junior Doctors**

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· **Protestors express disappointment at attendance of MPs to debate NHS Bill on Friday 11th March**

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Photographs are available on request.

More than 250 marched through along the Promenade in Cheltenham to a rally in Montpellier Gardens on Saturday, in a “March for the NHS” organised by Stroud Against the Cuts, Cheltenham & Gloucester Against Cuts, and Momentum Cheltenham and Gloucester (one of the local branches of the group set up to support Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership of the Labour Party).

A [video of the March](#) has already been viewed 3,500 times. On Wednesday 9th March, polling firm Ipsos Mori reported that “Public support for the third round of the junior doctors’ strike is as high as it was for the first two strikes in January and February, [with] the same proportion (65%) supporting junior doctors strikes as for the previous round of action in February (66%) [. Meanwhile] Opposition to junior doctors striking has decreased by five percentage points [from 22%] to 17%”.

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Local Junior Doctor Charlotte complained ([in a speech recorded on video](#)) that David Cameron and other government ministers had been lying about the dispute. “Does he have any idea about the amazing emergency services that we are already providing?”, she asked. “There are Obs and Gynae services [Obstetrics and Gynaecology] 24/7, there is A&E 24/7, there are junior doctors on the wards dealing with all kinds of emergencies 24/7, 365 days a year.” Addressing Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, she said: “We work weekends Jeremy, we work nights Jeremy, we work all year Jeremy. Trying to use the argument that we need a 7-day NHS to change junior doctor contracts is completely flawed. You cannot spread 5-days worth of 9-5 doctors plus doctors that are providing emergency care 24/7, across 7 days. We are not overstaffed in the week and we cannot be then spread to the weekend. They are not proposing that we actually work more hours, they just want to spread us thinner across the week. But we’re already understaffed during the week! We need more resources. If you want to sell a 7-day NHS to the public, you have to be willing to increase funding, increase the number of nurses, increase the diagnostics staff, increase the number of social workers so you can actually discharge patients at the weekend. Junior doctors are already there all weekend. All night, all day – Christmas, Easter – I’m working Easter weekend for example!”

As well as the speeches from another Junior Doctor, a member of the Royal College of Nurses, and local campaigners, a statement was read out on behalf of Shane Clark - a UNISON steward in the ambulance service who was working and hence unable to make the protest: “UNISON members from South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, the organisation that provides 999 and out-of-hours doctor services to Gloucestershire has massive concerns about the state of emergency service provision in the NHS. This is not limited to Gloucestershire because this is a national issue and one that our UNISON colleagues within other neighbouring NHS organisations continue to highlight on an almost daily basis.

So what is the root issue? Put simply it's a lack of government funding over a long period of time. This long term neglect has all of a sudden caught up with us. [...] Our members in UNISON also stand in solidarity alongside the Junior Doctors and groups such as 38Degrees, Bristol Anti-Cuts Alliance and Stroud Against Cuts to name but a few - all with the same aim of highlighting these concerns. Together we are stronger and it's great to know so many people

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care about the great work done by those in the NHS.”

James Beecher from Stroud Against the Cuts spoke about why the group supported the NHS Reinstatement Bill that had its second reading in Parliament on Friday 11th March: “The Bill seeks to reverse not only the Coalition Government’s Health & Social Care Act introduced by Andrew Lansley – which introduced Clinical Commissioning Groups, mandatory tendering of services, and removed the duty to provide comprehensive healthcare – but previous marketising reforms too. Crucially including not only a resolution on PFI and protection for international trade agreements, not only the end of the ‘external market’ that allows private companies to take over our health services, but the ‘internal market’ that forces even public NHS bodies to compete against each other [...] The NHS Reinstatement Bill calls for an “organisation” of what is currently disorganised – fragmented and competing.””

Mr Beecher and others expressed disappointment that under 50 MPs attended the debate on the Bill, including only 14 Labour MPs. They said Stroud Against the Cuts would continue to support the bill and encourage MPs to do so. The group will also be supporting further strike action by Junior Doctors, set for 8am on Wed 6th - 8am Fri 8th April and 8am on Tues 26th- 8am Thurs 28th April.

Notes for editors:

1. For more information on the March, including photos and videos, go to [the Stroud Against the Cuts Facebook page](#)

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2. For more [information on the Junior Doctors strike](#) , organised by the British Medical Association.

3. The [full details of the Ipsos Mori polling](#) are available online.