

The **MEDWAY ACTIVIST**

Welcome to issue one of the Kent and Medway Activist. This quarterly e-journal will report on the activities of the Trades Union Councils, of East Kent, Thanet and Medway. It will also feature articles of interest, new and ongoing campaigns. Forthcoming events and guest editorials. The aim is to draw together and highlight much of the excellent work being done across Kent. Towards building a socialist alternative to race to the bottom economics and xenophobia. Currently being peddled as the only option by the establishment. We welcome your feedback and letters / emails on subjects we feature or you think we should feature. To contact us you can email: ivorridell@hotmail.co.uk or write to KMA Editor, **11 Beatty Avenue, Gillingham, Kent. ME7 2BZ**

Forthcoming meetings and events!

Friday 23rd March 2018	Public listening event for stroke Consultation. 10.30—Rainham
Wednesday 28th March 2018	MTUC Meeting 19.30—Sunlight Centre, Gillingham
Wednesday 25th April 2018	MTUC Meeting 19.30—Sunlight Centre, Gillingham
Saturday 28th April 2018	International Workers Memorial Day 'Unionised workplaces are safer workplaces'
Saturday 28th April 2018	Local workers memorial Day event Rochester Castle Memorial Tree
Saturday 28th April 2018	MTUC Quiz Night Venue to be confirmed!
Wednesday 25th April 2018	MTUC Meeting 19.30—Sunlight Centre, Gillingham
Sunday 6th May 2018	MTUC May Day Rally and March 11.45 Near, White Lion Pub, Chatham
Tuesday 1st March 2018	National May Day celebrations. March and Rally in London
Saturday 12th May 2018	'New Deal for Working People' National TUC March, LONDON

Issue1 March 2018



Hundreds demonstrate to retain stroke service at the QEQM!

A fantastic turnout of people from across the community at the Demonstration outside the Queen Mother, Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEQM) in Margate.

Hundreds of people from health professionals, local organisations and trade unions to political parties (Tories and UKIP notable by their absence) patients past, present and future.

The demo particularly focused on the threat to take the Stroke services away from the hospital along with others and centre them in Mid Kent at Ashford. Bearing in mind the advice that the 'first half hour' is critical in the treatment and recovery levels. It seems that the bean counters and political dogmatists are quite happy to let people die or be severely disabled by their decisions. As long as it saves them some room on their balance sheet.

Even they admit that it will only cover 92% of the area effectively. So apparently the other 8% can go away and die?

Strong words maybe, but I don't really see any other words that reflects their true intention.

BUT, this is just the tip of the iceberg. That is coming our way as they roll out their Sustainability and Transformation Plans. Which will see the setting up of a system that broadly reflects the American Model, ready for the big sell off (outsourcing / franchising).

Make no mistake, if we do not stand up now, then there will be no way back. Once the privateers have their grip on health provision in the UK, they—



- will never let it go. Because they understand; you have to fight hard and fight dirty if necessary, to hold on to that which matters to you!

After some rousing speeches the masses moved off along the main road up to Westfield Cross Shopping Centre.

On arrival the tension rose as security and local PCSO's tried to deny the right of protest, by barring access to the main thoroughfare through Westfield. After some gentle persuasion and a sight of the size of the crowd they would have to placate should access be blocked. The senior person in charge acquiesced on the condition, the PA system be switched off.

As it happened the PA wasn't needed. The marchers were more vocal than any speaker system could be and when many of the local shoppers and bystanders joined in the chanting. The message was very clear indeed. "WHO'S NHS" "OUR NHS"!

The crowd then rallied at the end of the march for a couple of closing speeches and a commitment to continue the fight until the marketplace had been driven out of OUR NHS` and it was put back in the hands of those who believe in it and use it.

The people!

Things that make you go, "GRRR".

Each year the top four supermarket chains, use Government Social Security payments to top up their low paid workers wages. To the tune of £955,300,000! [\[source: Vox Political ~ politics for the people\]](#)

Almost one billion pounds of public money goes to prop up the profits of Tesco, ASDA, Morrisons and Sainsbury. Through our social security system.

UCU, standing up for a decent retirement. Like the Dean will get?

A great turnout of UCU members at the University of Kent, Medway Campus for the first day of their escalating strike action after their employer decided to arbitrarily change their pension arrangements. Leaving them £10,000 per year worse off when they retire. The management have made all sorts of ridiculous and -



- illegal claims in order to harass and intimidate members into not striking. Including forcing them to work, unpaid to make up the hours they are striking, for which they already do not get paid.

Some universities are even threatening that of any students claim damages as a result of the action. The individuals will be named on any court action and held legally accountable.

This is of course absolute rubbish and unenforceable. But just goes to show the depths to which employers will go to in the current climate, to spread fear and intimidation through their workforce.

Standing shoulder to shoulder with the UCU members were representatives from the **Medway Trades Union Council** and Medway Labour Group.

MTUC Secretary, Steve Wilkins, said "it was great to see Labour Party activists back out supporting local trade disputes and standing with the working class people of Medway for fair and equal treatment".



Picket Supervisor, Alex Stevens said "This is a very important national dispute for several reasons. It is a serious attack on UCU members terms and conditions that will set the scene for more attacks if the employers succeed in pushing it—

- through. UCU have not just managed to beat the Tories ballot thresholds but have also drawn up a bold plan of escalating strikes starting with two days this week, tomorrow and Friday, followed by 3 day week, 4 days the week after and culminating in a full 5 days strike the following week".

Health campaigns Report from MTUC Secretary Steve Wilkins



STPs

THE BIGGEST THREAT TO THE NHS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF!

One of the key campaigns the Trades Council is involved in is the Medway Health Campaign that we launched in response to the threat posed by the biggest NHS re-organisation ever that most people have never heard of, Sustainability and Transformation Plans.

The NHS is under-funded, understaffed and struggling to cope with increasing demand. Rather than increasing funding the Government is aiming to cut another £22bn from the NHS by 2020, nearly a fifth of the entire NHS Budget. They intend to achieve this through Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs). The Government claims that NHS spending is unsustainable, but it is one of the most efficient health systems and one of the cheapest as a proportion of GDP in the advanced economies.

STPs (known here as the Medway Model) involve a major reorganisation of the NHS from top to bottom. Under the 2012 Health & Social Care Act any new or reorganised health service must be put out to tender, so most services will be run by private providers in the next 3 -4 years.

STPs will reduce the number of hospitals offering A&E and specialist services. Some will just do planned operations while others will become GP-led Urgent Care and Minor



People will be discharged from hospital earlier to be treated from their own homes in the community. Personal care will then fall on family members or domiciliary care agencies that people will have to pay for.

The biggest area of STP saving in Kent is staff pay, £232m. This can only mean fewer or worse paid staff or both. GPs will be merged into 'hubs' to provide care which it is estimated could reduce the number surgeries by 40% so people will need to travel further to see a doctor. Reduced costs for providing care for elderly people will be achieved through use of charities, volunteers, low paid domiciliary care workers, charging for care, community services and activities, at the same time as charities and community groups face funding cuts.

A public consultation is due to take place between the end April and the end of June. We will need as many people as possible to take part and make our opposition clear.

STROKE CENTRALISATION CONSULTATION

There is another NHS public consultation taking place right now on the centralisation of stroke services into just three hospitals across Kent. This is very much related to the STP and we believe that the three hospitals that are chosen to have the shiny new Hyper Acute Stroke Units (HASUs) and Acute Stroke Units (ASUs) will also be the three hospitals that retain 24/7 A&E and specialist services while the losers are downgraded. HASUs and ASUs will have dedicated teams of specialists and equipment to enable the best care to be given. We are told that every hospital cannot have a HASU because there are not enough stroke consultants and specialist staff. This is the result of years of underfunding and a lack of investment. When someone is having a stroke time is critical, the longer someone has to wait for treatment the more brain cells they lose and the worse the potential outcome.

It is being argued that the extra travelling time to a HASU is outweighed by the specialist 72 hour treatment when people get there that we are assured will reduce the number of deaths and amount of long term disability. This claim is based on what has happened in London where there are 8 HASUs and the London Ambulance Service manages to get patients to a HASU with an average time of 16 minutes. In Kent the target is to get patients to a HASU in less than 60 minutes.

The most time critical element when someone is having a stroke is to get them scanned and then, if appropriate given a clot busting drug, a procedure called thrombolysis. Therefore the shorter the time it takes to have these the better. That is why we are arguing that people with symptoms of a stroke should be taken to their nearest hospital, whether or not it is a HASU, to be scanned and if necessary given thrombolysis under the supervision of a stroke consultant via a video link to a HASU. After the most time critical element has been dealt with, patients can then be transferred to a HASU to complete their 72 hours of intensive monitoring and treatment.

What we need to do now is to get as many people as possible to fill in the on line consultation questionnaire which can be found at

www.kentandmedway.nhs.uk/stroke

While the questions are based on the assumption that you accept the proposed model there is plenty of space to write comments in and in particular we want to highlight our alternative proposal.



If you would like to give any feedback on 'the Activist'. If you have any pictures, articles or items you would like us to share through the e-newsletter. Please email them to:
ivorridell@hotmail.co.uk
Or sms/text: **07519 721667**

Are you in a trade Union?
Is your branch affiliated? To the
MEDWAY TRADES UNION COUNCIL
If not, why not?



The MTUC, is a meeting place for trade unionists, political activists and people working for social change, to meet, share ideas and experience. To build a better future for everyone.

To join, contact: Steve Wilkins
Tel: 07947 361935 or

SIGNIFICANT LABOUR VICTORY IN TORY HEARTLAND!

Conservative Councillor Kelly Tolhurst, darling of the Tory, glitterati (at the moment), stood down from her Council seat at Medway Council 'to concentrate on her parliamentary career as 'party whip'.

This seemed to act as a spur to Labour activists in the area and they pulled off a dramatic and clear victory in the ensuing by election.

Alex Paterson saw off all comers to take the supposedly safe, seat with a clear majority of 205 votes.

The success was put down to a general dissatisfaction with the high handed, arrogant and questionable behaviour of the Tory run council over many years. On key issues such as the Surestart closures, proposed plans for the Strood Waterfront, redevelopment and much more.

A labour party insider said " the local activists pulled out all the stops on this one, organising and getting out there, to doorstep voters, setting up high street stalls and

without a doubt, the increased number of activists available since the mass sign ups in recent years has had a significant impact".

