



VOICES

CLEANERS BALLOT TO STRIKE in ongoing dispute for equal work rights

More than a hundred cleaners who won an in-housing agreement at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) after fighting historic campaign against outsourcing to private contractors have vowed to return to the picket line after accusing GOSH of failing to keep their promises.

While T&Cs have improved for workers, GOSH has DENIED them annual leave, maternity/paternity, and redundancy.

United Voices of the World said "[GOSH Trustees] have refused to meet or engage in talks with UVW and have made no attempt to negotiate despite being warned on numerous occasions".

Workers have now called for their union to ballot for them to strike.

Alpha Anne, who's been at Great Ormond Street hospital for 7 years said the cleaners will continue the fight: "All we are asking for is equality with the rest of the NHS staff. We are tired of being treated like second class workers."

The ballot to strike comes just months after the cleaners won an in-housing agreement that was widely lauded as an important victory against precarious work contracts. Despite this, they say a two-tier system persists and that they are willing to take to the picket line to demand parity with other NHS employees.

In addition to this Security Officers at the trust, the last group of outsourced workers at GOSH have gone into dispute alongside domestics to demand a complete end to outsourcing at the trust.

Workers at GOSH have shown incredible bravery in demanding better from their employer, please show your support at the picket line and donate to their strike fund here: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/support-alpha-at-great-ormond-street-hospital>

Alex Etches, United Voices of the World



The Health and Care Bill DANGERS TO OUR NHS WORKFORCE



The Bill will have long-term implications for the NHS, not least for its staff. It could enable new structures and ways of working that will threaten pay, terms and conditions, undermine job satisfaction and patient safety, and devalue skills and experience while weakening professional autonomy and unionisation.

The implications of the Bill for NHS staff are not explicit: the devil is in the detail and what's included in the earlier White Paper and previous NHS England (NHSE) publications.

Flexibility

The White Paper suggests that 'flexible working' would bring positive changes for both employers

and staff. But this would require staff to move as required, to different organisations and locations. This could prove highly disruptive work and personal lives. The lack of a stable workforce in any location could not only be hugely stressful but create a barrier to the kind of team building that is fundamental to good patient care.

Pay and T&Cs

Insecurity for staff is also implied, as the Bill requires each of the 42 Integrated Care Systems (ICS), which will be how the NHS is restructured, to draw up their own constitution. This would allow each ICS to alter the terms of Agenda for Change (AfC), the national framework for ensuring equal pay for equal work for NHS staff. Given the economic pressure that each ICS will be under, it's possible they'll begin to determine employees' terms and bring in local pay deals - ending national pay deals, something that could potentially drain staff away from poorly funded areas and threaten patient care.

It's vital we oppose this Bill: Go to [www.KeepOurNHSPublic.com](http://www.keepournhspublic.com) to find out more.

Keep Our NHS Public

Royal London Hospital

In July the back of house catering workers at the Royal London hospital took strike action over roster changes and bullying. Serco gave in to all of their demands.

This was a major win. It is the first time that Unite has beat Serco in a dispute in health. Even though it was 25 workers it provides the 650 other ancillary workers confidence that they can beat Serco too should they attempt to fight.

Now all the ancillary workers (650) across the 3 main Barts hospitals - St Barts, the Royal London and Whipps Cross - are about to ballot for strike action over a number of issues including the pay claim (15%) bullying, workload and misuse of the disciplinary policy.

Unite have written to Mark Bagnall, Group Director of Estates and Facilities Management at Barts Health NHS Trust, urging Barts Health Trust to utilise the break clause in Serco's contract and give notice to end the contract with Serco on 1st November 2021. Unite are yet to receive a response.

We spoke to a Unite member.

NSV: Do outsourced workers want to be brought back into the NHS and why?

A: 'The best thing we can do is ask to go back in house. I don't think Serco will pay us the money. But we are talking about PPE, working conditions, equipment, standards, pressure from supervisors. I don't like Serco or any private company - they're only interested in directors - that's where all the profit goes.'

NSV: What do you think the impact of greater privatisation on the NHS will be for staff and patients?

A: 'It will result in poorer quality of care and less communication - when I was with the NHS there was a friendlier experience between staff and patients and everyone was one big family. Privatisation brings in a sense of - 1984...BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING - no time to talk, liaise with colleagues, just DO YOUR JOB. There's no intimacy between hospital patients and staff. People get bitter when treated like muck and feel worthless and it causes stress and anxiety.

But it isn't cheap in London, two thirds of our pay goes on rent and food. We are under pressure in these jobs and life becomes miserable. It is a Dickensian life. Some people have two jobs so some people might not want to strike because they think they're better off but it's not the case.'

NSV: Has the pandemic changed the attitude among hospital workers to fight for better pay, terms, and conditions?

A: 'The workers were put under serious pressure to deliver the goods because the NHS staff weren't allowed to go home and were working 24/7. We had to provide services and it was very stressful and worrying time.'

'A few workers I knew died. It was like a pressure boiler. It put a strain on the NHS and therefore the whole workforce. As outsourced workers we are 15 percent down from NHS workers. They've just offered us something like 1 percent which is like a slap in the face. Colleagues did go on strike and it was very positive. The mood is good now.'

Unite member

PATIENT SAFETY AND THE NURSING CRISIS

Nurses everywhere are very anxious about patient safety. It's one of the reasons they are at breaking point and are leaving the profession in droves. Not only are they worried that they might accidentally do patients harm, they are worried about losing their jobs and registration because of it.

Every qualified nurse in the UK has to be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) before they can work in the NHS or the independent sector. The NMC has a legal duty to protect the safety of patients and the public from nurses who might do harm.



The combination of a shortage of about 40,000 nurses and Covid means that safety is being compromised for reasons beyond nurses' control.

In order to maximise safety, all nurses must agree to follow the NMC Code of Conduct <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/read-the-code-online/>

One of these says:

PRESERVE SAFETY

You make sure that patient and public safety is not affected. You work within the limits of your competence, exercising your professional 'duty of candour' and raising concerns immediately whenever you come across situations that put patients or public safety at risk. You take necessary action to deal with any concerns where appropriate.

So it is a nurse's duty to report any inability to nurse safely to the NMC just as it is the NMC's legal responsibility to keep us all safe. Nurses' ability to do this themselves no longer lies within their own power, no matter how often they inform managers of safety issues.

The NMC, the Government, NHS senior managers and Trust leaders who remain largely silent themselves, need to listen and take action.

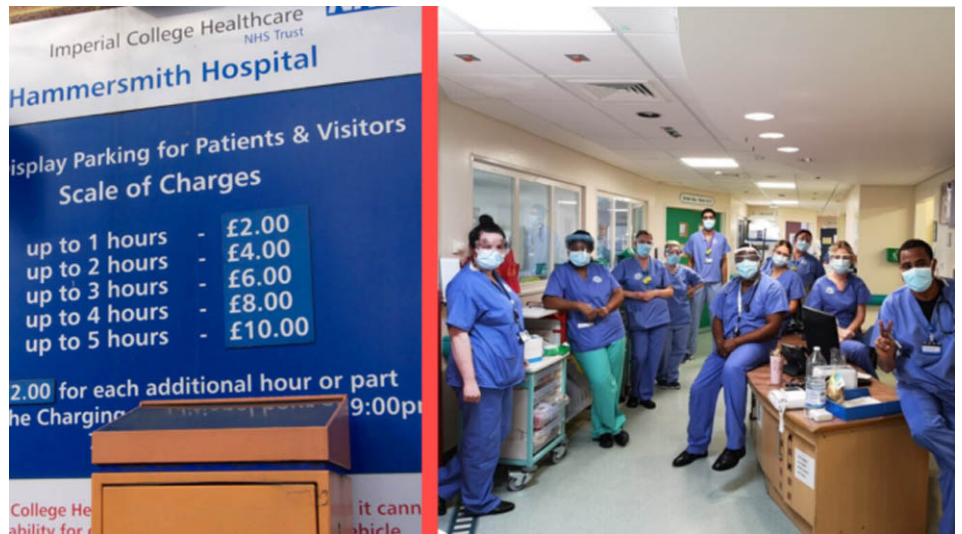
The NMC needs to press the government to provide more resources to nurses so they can do their work safely and in order to fulfil its legal duty.

But the public also has to realise that the situation is so serious that they also need to speak out publicly and make those demands of the government.

NURSES CANNOT DO THIS ALONE.

Gay Lee, retired nurse

The choice facing NHS workers pushed into poverty - LEAVE THE NHS OR FIGHT BACK?



That GMB indicative ballots overwhelming rejected the 3% pay offer is a sign that staff are getting ready for the latter. More than 9 out of 10 GMB members in the NHS have rejected the Government's pay 'insult', meaning the union will now move to a strike ballot after 93% of members opposed the offer.

We recognise that even though there are unique challenges in organising NHS workers the GMB indicative ballot result sends a strong message that growing numbers of our members are no longer prepared to be taken for granted by the NHS bosses and the government.

As a trade union we recognise that linking up with our friends in all trade unions, Keep Our NHS Public, NHS Workers Say No, NHS Staff Voices, Health Campaigns Together and others will only

strengthen our hand while building the coalition of forces necessary to protect and defend the NHS. We'll be calling on these comrades and allied social movements to assist us with leafleting hospitals, engaging with our reps and members, and sharing information about pay justice and the impact of the cuts and privatisation on hospital staff and patients alike.

The fight for the NHS belongs to all of us because a decent, accessible health care system run by skilled, highly trained, and competent staff is vital for absolutely everyone in this.

The overwhelming mood to reject 3% across the NHS trade unions clearly indicates that the battle to save our NHS for patients and staff has reached a new level and that we can win.

Helen O'Connor, GMB NHS organiser

WHO WE ARE

NHS Staff Voices is a network of NHS workers, from medical to domestic staff, all interested in fighting for a better, safer and fairer NHS. We are part of a wider campaign called Keep Our NHS Public, the largest NHS campaign in the UK.

We all know there is a huge crisis in the NHS and that we are at a point where the service is very compromised. Coronavirus has exposed this, and now is the right time to campaign for better pay and working conditions for staff, as well as improving outcomes for our patients.

Find out more by visiting our facebook page which has all the up to date information, including links to our meetings which we encourage you to join: <https://www.facebook.com/NHSStaffVoices/>
You can sign up to our mailing list by emailing us at NHSStaffVoices.KONP@gmail.com



Whether you simply want to get organised, let us know how things are in your workplace, volunteer or write for us, send an email to NHSStaffVoices.KONP@gmail.com



Join us for our next organising meeting

We look forward to hearing from you. Together we can save the NHS.