

# Save Whipps Cross Hospital Campaign

Rally issue, 3 February [www.savewhippscros.org](http://www.savewhippscros.org)



## Making a difference

*Charlotte Monro, Chair, Save Whipps Cross Campaign*

We have walked our streets with petitions, stood in our market places, gathered to speak in packed meeting halls, made our presence felt in the boardrooms of NHS London, Whipps Cross and the Primary Care Trust. We have lobbied on town hall steps, spoken in council chambers, and taken our message to 'stakeholder' meetings.

Throughout, our local paper has broadcast our concern. Now the issues have been debated in Parliament (see page 2).

Our campaign has made a difference. To downgrade Whipps Cross will not be an easy option for any authority – that is now clear. The facts stand in their own right – Whipps serves our community well and we need it.

But the threat remains: downgrading to an emergency only centre could be a death sentence for the hospital in the long term. And now we hear of plans for a further £15 million of cuts at the hospital.

We are campaigning not just to save Whipps – but to save it as a fully functioning, fully funded District General Hospital as part of a comprehensive local NHS health service.

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## JOIN THE MARCH FOR WHIPPS



*Don't let them axe Whipps: demonstrators at a rally outside Whipps on Saturday 15 December*

The march and rally on Saturday 3 February is in protest against the threatened closure of Whipps Cross Hospital.

Protesters from the local community in Waltham Forest will be joined by the three borough MPs – Iain Duncan-Smith, Harry Cohen and Neil Gerrard, local councillors, health workers and speakers from local churches and mosques.

Whipps is a 636-bedded District General Hospital with one of the busiest A&Es in the country. It serves a local population of 350,000 including areas with some of the highest deprivation and health needs in London.

Yet Whipps is under threat from Fit for the Future, part of the government's national plan to reconfigure hospital services.

There is massive opposition to the plan, which NHS London and Primary Care Trusts across outer NE London have proposed, to move

services from Whipps and King George Hospital in Goodmayes to the new Queen's Hospital in Romford.

Proposals include moving some hospital services into the community, where existing nursing services are already overstretched and cut back. Already, this winter has seen massive pressure on A&E, and demand for beds at Whipps has reached the highest levels since 1999.

Whipps has also been hit by financial deficits because funding does not meet escalating work and costs. Staff are made the scapegoat with 400 jobs being cut, around 70 staff being made redundant, and three wards closed this year in a drive to meet a deficit of £27 million.

Now unions are told the Trust is planning a new round of cost reductions to save a further £15 million to meet national funding requirements in 2007/2008.

## The latest developments in Fit for the Future

No formal announcement has yet been made on the options to go for public consultation, but two options are widely expected to be proposed:

1) keeping Whipps Cross as a District General hospital but downgrading King George Ilford to an ambulatory care centre i.e. walk-in urgent care, day surgery, out-patients and some community beds (option 4);

2) Whipps Cross downgraded to an "emergency care centre" only with all elective care e.g. non-emergency surgery being provided at King George Hospital and the Independent (private) Sector Treatment Centre there.

The Fit for the Future Options are expected to go to Trust Boards open meetings in March before public consultation which now looks unlikely to start till April or May.

## Three reasons to save Whipps Cross



*Alan Hakim, Consultant Rheumatologist at Whipps and leading campaigner/vice-chair of the Save Whipps campaign*

"First, our hospital couldn't be any closer to home! Overall we serve a local population of the order of 350,000, all within an approx 6 mile radius!

"Second, we have achieved standards of care that places us in the top 40% of hospitals under the Health Commission's own assessment.

"Third, I have yet to see any compelling evidence that the community models proposed by the Government are valid either in financial or clinical terms. I am also deeply concerned that clinical practice will become fragmented, eroding quality of care, education and training, and clinical research, and that patients may lose a fundamental 'choice', this being the desire, or dare I say the right, to see a specialist for an opinion locally."



## Local MPs force Whipps debate in Parliament

Our local MPs secured a debate in the House of Commons on Wednesday 31 January, speaking in unity for keeping Whipps as a district general hospital - and putting more money into it. (The full transcript can be downloaded at [www.savewhippscross.org](http://www.savewhippscross.org))

"We all speak as one voice, one intention. We want our Hospital."

Iain Duncan Smith, Harry Cohen, Neil Gerrard, Lee Scott, Mike Gape, and Jon Cruddas raised the debate to highlight the threat to local health services caused by the current plan 'Fit for the Future' – all spoke strongly.

Points raised included:

- Whipps Cross's inclusion in the Olympic Bid Book and the investment into local health services that the Secretary Of State for Health had guaranteed.
- That it was ridiculous to be conducting a NE London review when there was a London wide review in progress already and the two reviews may conflict with each other.
- The 'Fit for the Future Plan' draws heavily on support

that can be offered from neighbouring hospitals, although no account has been made of travel times to them or whether there is any spare capacity.

- No account has been made of the population growth in the area.
- As the services are pushed out into the community, no account has been made of the amount/lack of investment made into health care facilities in the community ahead of any possible changes.

"We cannot afford to let any of our health services be reduced any further. Within the next decade the population in our area is predicted to rise by 311,000. Local health chiefs are already transferring services to the community, but there are no staff there to take the burden – the same health chiefs have cut back there too!" said Ian Duncan Smith.

"I have been overwhelmed by the response from the public. This march will show some of the strength of public opinion – the local Health Service Chiefs must listen."

## CONSULTATION MEETING IN WANSTEAD

Councillors are holding an extraordinary committee meeting on Monday 5 February at Wanstead Church School, Church Path, Wanstead, starting at 7.15pm to discuss the proposed cuts at Whipps.

# Whipps Cross – Serving our community: the Diabetes Service

We talk to specialist departments to find out how they are working to improve the health of the community: This story shows just how artificial the concept of ‘acute hospital’ versus ‘community services’ can be.

Diabetes is high in Waltham Forest; about 35,000 people within the population served by Whipps Cross.

Diabetes is a condition in which the level of sugar in the blood is not being regulated properly by the body. In the short term, poor control can lead to collapse and coma, and in the long term damage can occur to eyes, kidneys and blood vessels (stroke and heart attack). Good control has a major impact on these complications; lifestyle, medication and insulin all play a critical role.

“Diabetes is everywhere and we aim to match its ubiquity” say the specialist nurses. They provide assessment to patients and advice and training to staff throughout Whipps Cross and support for all community services – district nurses, GPs and nurse practitioners.

There are 4 diabetes specialist nurses working alongside 3 consultants. The Primary Care Trust also employ 1.5 specialist nurses and currently there is one GP with a diabetes special interest.

“We provide open access to the Gillian Hanson Centre (week days,

8-5) for all our registered patients, and their carers. People can come in if for example they are having frequent hypoglycaemic attacks or



***In diabetes, immediate assessment saves patients' lives***

their insulin pen has broken. The doctors are based here and we can immediately provide assessment and treatment.

“The other day a young person under the GPs care was sent in just for a diet sheet, but on hearing the person talk of their symptoms we realised insulin was needed, and started treatment straight away. Without this input, the patient could have ended up in A&E.”

“The Centre benefits from a multi-disciplinary team including dieticians and specialist podiatrists. When patients are receiving their regular foot care the podiatrist can call one of the consultants to assess signs of infection, treatment can be started straight away and by catching this early prevent eventual leg amputations.”

Diabetic foot problems result in more days spent in hospital than any other diabetic problem so prevention also helps reduce the pressure on hospitals”. Dr David Levy, one of the Consultants in diabetes, explained the truly open access the service had developed over the years was invaluable in efficiently managing diabetes and its complications.

Although most diabetes centres have some open-access sessions, the Whipps Cross centre is, as far as he knows, unique in providing such accessibility. This is consistently highly appreciated by patients and fellow health professionals alike.

To raise awareness in the community the team spend a day out in markets, community centres, and mosques offering screening and advice – checking blood pressure, weight, cholesterol, and offering advice from dieticians and exercise specialists from leisure centres. This is an important part of their educational and public health remit.

## How PFI is draining the NHS – and distorting health planning

The new Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Queens Hospital in Romford cost £238 million. Owned by a private consortium it is being rented back to Barking Havering and Redbridge NHS Trust for £36 million per annum, index linked, for the next 30 years.

But that Trust already has an underlying cumulative deficit of £43m this year.

This financial crisis is the driving force behind the whole Fit for the

Future review that threatens Whipps Cross and King Georges – sucking in surrounding health resources to pay the inflated costs of PFI.

It mirrors experience across the country.

Research published by Edinburgh University into the Private Finance Initiative in Scotland's NHS has found that for a total building value of £602 million, PFI has created a debt of £2.4 billion.

This comes out of the money allocated day to day for staff, medicines and equipment.

PFI provides one of the highest rates of return for shareholders, and this is our money, drained out of the NHS.

We are witnessing locally the distorting influence these interests exert on the decisions that will shape of health provision for generations to come. We can't allow it.

# Why I am marching

The following letter was sent to the local Primary Care Trust and to NHS London Strategic Health Authority by local resident Diana Wellings

As a resident of LBWF since 1987 I and my family have lived within a short walk of Whipps Cross ... Many many times I have been grateful for having made the decision to live so near to its services.

Here are some of the reasons why I want the hospital to remain open

- I had no car for several years (many LBWF residents are in this position) and would not have been able to get medical attention quickly if I had had to travel to Romford for this.
- My 2nd daughter was born very soon after onset of labour and was expertly delivered within 1/2 hour at WX maternity unit. This would have resulted in an unsupervised labour had I been sent out of the borough to another hospital.
- In 1993 I contracted pneumonia while looking after 2 small daughters with chickenpox and a husband with a broken foot. Despite being extremely ill, I was able to cope with the support and treatment afforded by my GP and the hospital. The stress levels in my life would have been intolerable if we had all had to travel miles for our respective treatments.
- My 2nd daughter suffered severe internal haemorrhaging 2 years ago and we were able to get her to A & E ourselves (no ambulance) within 5 minutes.

These are just some of the highlights of my family's interaction with Whipps Cross. We are not unique, just an ordinary and dare I say it, healthy family for 99% of the time. To shut the hospital down because it is not balancing its books is a stupid and totally insensitive decision. The medical needs of the borough's taxpayers should come first in any plan for the future.

I have signed the petition and will be marching on Saturday Feb 3rd.

## Local hero: the cab driver's story

**This story is currently doing the rounds at Whipps. We think it's true – we certainly hope it is!**

The Chief Executive of NHS London, the strategic health authority covering all London, was travelling to Whipps Cross for a meeting with Trust Board members.

She took a cab from the tube station and the cab driver, being chatty, asked her what she did.

On finding she worked for the NHS the conversation went something like this: Are you a nurse? I used to be but I am in administration now. What do you do in administration? I am in the strategic health authority responsible for health services across London.

At this point the cab driver applied his brakes, pulled up the cab, and said, "Unless you can promise me you are not closing my local hospital you are not riding in my cab." At which point she found herself on the pavement walking the remainder of the way.

Clearly this made its impression as she told the story to Whipps managers and related how NHS London had been inundated with letters and emails.

## The Save Whipps Cross Hospital Campaign



The campaign has one simple aim: to keep Whipps serving the local community as a fully funded and functioning general hospital, working within a local NHS system that provides good health care for everyone.

Our members are nurses, doctors, consultants, health workers, patients, and members of the general public. Members come from all sections of the community and across the political spectrum, united by the common cause.

For more details, email [info@savewhippscross.org](mailto:info@savewhippscross.org), or see [www.savewhippscross.org](http://www.savewhippscross.org).

## THANK YOU

The campaign would like to thank Aldgate Press for donating the beautiful Save Whipps Cross colour posters that you can see all over the area.

Thanks also to [www.abetterbadge.com](http://www.abetterbadge.com) for similarly donating the popular I Love Whipps Cross badges and car stickers.

Many other local businesses have also provided us with general discounts. To all of you, many thanks!