

JUNIOR DOCTORS ARE NOT ALONE IN THEIR FIGHT

On our first strike day, following our magnificent 98% vote for industrial action; it's important to reflect on the context in which our fight against the imposition of new contracts which compromise on fair working conditions and adequate safeguards is taking place. The last 10 years have seen the NHS suffer as a result of increasing privatisation, pay cuts and obscene new contracts for its workers. The proposed contracts are part of a wider political attack by the government on one of our most valued institutions; which negatively affects everyone who works in or uses NHS services

There's a reason why Cameron has called the Junior Doctors dispute his 'miners' strike, it's because, as Thatcher did with coal mining, he wants to dismantle our industry. The NHS is being hammered from all angles, it is in a financial black hole of £2.2 billion and is lurching from crisis to crisis. The stakes in our fight could not be higher.

This is about more than contracts

Jeremy Hunt's disregard for our commitment, and to the values of the NHS, has angered junior doctors into voting in such overwhelming numbers for strike action – the highest vote for industrial action in recent trade union history. We chanted "Save our contracts, save our patients, save the NHS" because our fight for fair contracts, like the fight student bursaries, is explicitly linked with protecting the NHS. Even if we win our own fight with the government; we need to carry the energy of our dispute into supporting any and all fights in the NHS happening this year; the student bursary campaign, consultants contract

negotiations and agenda for change staff negotiations to name a few.

Continue to organise

Junior doctors are not alone in their fight. We all know support from other health workers, patients, NHS campaigners has flowed in from the beginning of the contracts campaign. The polls are showing overwhelming public support and all health workers know that if we don't win, *their* contracts will be next.

The student bursaries campaign has shown that this is already happening; tons of Junior Doctors and other health workers attended the students' 5,000 strong demonstration in central London yesterday. Many more will be supporting our picket lines today. And in an unprecedented move: the student bursary campaign has called for students to walk out from placements on the 10th of February in support of our strike.

The Junior doctors' campaign represents the largest and most important campaign in defence of the NHS we have yet seen; if we can build local organisation, in every workplace and community, we will be unstoppable. Students from Kings who helped organised last Saturday's demonstration, alongside medical students, have called a meeting on 28th January to plan the next steps of their campaign and how to build links with the junior doctors' campaign. We should try and organise meetings in every workplace or trust bringing together Students, junior doctors, other staff groups and NHS campaigners to organise and plan the next stages in our fight to save the NHS from privatisation and ultimately the lives of our patients.

– Sally W



Supporting each other

£3 an hour. That's how much the bursary roughly works out at for a student nurse, midwife or allied health professional, if they are even entitled to the full amount. It's not much but given that 90% of 2,000 Student Nurses asked would not have undertaken a degree without it, the question is why take it away? Why saddle key workers with £50,000 debt? It has been estimated that it will take over 100 years for the average student to pay off this debt given the disgracefully low wages that nurses and others earn when they finally qualify (roughly £21,000 per year).

The Government rhetoric is that 10,000 new nurses will be trained as result of their bursary cuts, but where are these 10,000 people? The bursary is a lifeline for most.

Myself and other student nurses at Kings held our second demonstration in defence of our bursaries on Saturday in central London, other demonstrations were held in other cities around the country. Over 5,000 marched with us not only to save bursaries but also in complete support of the Junior doctors dispute and to save our NHS. After the success of our march, we're forming a national committee for our campaign so we can organise and escalate our campaign across the country. Our campaign has called and is committed to organising a walkout of students from their placements on 10th February in support of the strike that day. We know that we can only win if the Junior Doctors win their dispute and that we need to give everything we have to support them.

We will need to organise everyone who works in and uses NHS services; in every workplace and in every community. NHS workers have the power and the support from the public to take on this government and win. We're meeting on the 28th January at Kings to discuss with Med students how to take our campaign and the Junior Doctors' dispute forward, after that we'll need to widen meetings out to all health workers, patient groups and NHS campaigners.

The NHS will only last as long as there are good people left willing to fight for it, if we organise and fight together 2016 is the year we will start to win that fight. For each other, for society and for generations to come. – Eamon C

