Your Healthcare Services in East Sussex – Where we are up to now with the political changes

In 2011/12 the East Sussex Healthcare Trust finished the year with a surplus of £87,000. By 2017/18 the end of year annual report showed the Trust finishing the year with a deficit of £54,982,000.

Wage restraint and frustration of working with inadequate resources caused many NHS workers to leave their professions.

One NHS workforce vacancy out of every nine is left unfilled.

2013- Maternity services at the DGH were downgraded to a midwifery unit. Inpatient paediatrics was no longer to be provided at the DGH. Stroke services were no longer to be provided at the Conquest. Emergency General Surgery to no longer be provided at the DGH.

We started hearing reports of babies being born in cars on the roadside as frantic dads tried to get their partners to the Conquest. Children who had accidents right outside the gates of the DGH had to be taken by ambulance to the Conquest. Paramedics reported how the miles they travelled each shift had escalated. We started seeing queues of ambulances outside A&E as they waited to book in their patients.

2013- The 111 service was set up and began to create chaos almost immediately

Patients were advised to dial 111 if they needed medical advice, were not sure whether they needed to go to hospital or wanted to see a doctor out-of-hours.
The reality was that many people were confused about whether they should dial 999 or 111. The 111 call operators were not medically trained and there were too few clinicians on hand to advise them. They had a list of questions to ask a patient where they would be looking for a yes or no answer. They were expected to call an ambulance if they got more than a certain number of yes answers. Paramedics reported regularly being called out unnecessarily. Too few ambulances were available to answer 999 calls. The 111 service is run by a private healthcare company.

**One third of all our psychiatric inpatient beds available locally were closed**

Patients reported being told they needed hospital care and placed on a waiting list. Psychiatric nurses reported having to use the Mental Health Act to detain patients who they believed should be admitted as voluntary patients as it was the only way to get them a bed.

**2015 - CQC rated our hospital as inadequate**

Cuts were hurting our local NHS services. Staff were on pay restraint and some were leaving their professions placing the remaining staff under more pressure. Many people reported difficulties accessing their GP. Our hospital services started being farmed out to private companies. Efficiency was steadily decreasing and deficits were growing.

**2016 – Jeremy Hunt announces plans to change the junior doctor’s contracts**

Junior doctors voted in favour of strike action. This was not at first affecting emergency cover that junior doctors provide. After weeks of a political impasse junior doctors voted for the first ever all-out strike in the history of the NHS. Jeremy Hunt tried to pass this off as being the doctor’s grievance over pay but in fact the doctors were concerned the new contract would leave them too tired to provide safe care.

Jeremy Hunt announced in parliament that he was going to enforce the new contract.

Junior doctors took Jeremy Hunt to court where he claimed he was only saying he advised trusts to change the contracts.
NHS trusts and CCGs were watching deficits increase rapidly.

**2016 - East Sussex Healthcare Trust was placed in Financial Special Measures**

**2017 – Bursaries for student nurses were stopped**

The number of people applying to study nursing fell by 23%

**Sustainability and Transformation Plans – Slash, Trash and Privatise**

The head of NHS England announced his five-year-forward-view in reaction to growing deficits across all NHS trusts and CCGs. This view led to England being divided into 44 regions each of which had an unelected STP board who were charged with making changes that would absorb the deficits, in other words make cuts. Overall the aim was to cut about 1/3 of the total NHS spend. The boards met in secret and there was no public engagement.

In East Sussex the plans for primary care have already been incorporated into the operating plans of our CCGs. Only Hastings Council have refused to approve the STP process.

Unlike in many areas the plans for our hospitals and how they will change over the next five years have not been published in full.

But so far we have seen :-

The walk-in centre at Hastings Station Plaza is threatened with closure, possibly to relocate at the hospital.

The ENT ward from the Conquest hospital is to be closed.

There are concerns of job losses equating to around 10% of all ESHT staff

Staff parking charges have been increased

There are fears that our Trust, like many others will create a subsidiary company that would become the employer of staff. This would result in staff no longer being employed by the state and therefore excluded from the agreements on pay increases that have been achieved for the public sector.
Our CCGs, East Sussex Healthcare Trust and East Sussex County Council have formed an alliance called East Sussex Better Together. They are testing running as an Integrated Care Provider (ICP) or Accountable Care Organisation (ACO).

The ICP or ACO models are being disputed by the 999 Call for NHS Campaign group. A recent hearing at the Appeal Court rejected their arguments and they are furious. They are now applying to have the case heard at the Supreme Court. They have launched a crowd funding campaign to help them fight on, search for Justice 4 NHS if you wish to donate.

We must be prepared for more changes to come as a result of the STP. We must campaign for the plans to be published in full. We must demand our local authority refuses to work with the STP process. Vote for your NHS at the local elections this year. We must show unity with each other in opposition to the destruction of our local NHS services.

A Long-Term Plan for our NHS has been published recently and has already attracted wide criticism. Here is what John Lister, editor of Health Campaigns Together has said about it.

“All of the main lines of what has been published or leaked about the Plan are a depressing re-run of previous plans and gimmicks: the only novel proposals are for more central control and less accountability, for trusts to run more like and with private businesses seeking profits, and to raise money by undermining the
principles and values of the NHS through charging overseas visitors – a government policy widely condemned by NHS professional staff and campaigners as discriminatory and a step backwards from prevention and public health.

There is no reason to believe this plan, with even less local accountability and no serious plans for public consultation, will prove any more acceptable to the public or successful in implementation than the secretive STPs in 2016 or other previous failed efforts.

Campaigners have yet to see anything to recommend the new plans, or any indication NHS England is willing to come to grips with the crisis fuelled by chronic austerity limits on funding – or demand an end to chaos and fragmentation of the Health & Social Care Act.”

So now for some good news! You probably are needing it after all you have just read

The Tories have had one aim for the NHS since the start of the Coalition Government – to allow their mates in big business access into Britain’s healthcare system. But they know how much the UK population consider the NHS to be the pride of our nation.

So, they have used carrots and sticks to encourage support for their plans, concealed policy in lengthy documents rich in jargon and meaningless language. They have abused the dedication of NHS staff who have been fighting harder and harder to make sure we all get excellent care despite fewer resources. And they have lied to us all, time and time again.
They have done this because they know that if everyone knew and understood what is happening they would witness public outrage.

Our STP board has not published the plans for the hospitals in full because they want to avoid large scale public opposition. They are using a drip-drip process to avoid the protests seen in other areas.

The Tories are telling us what to do to save the NHS by making it clear what they don’t want us to do.

• We need to get ourselves as well-informed as possible and communicate everything we find to as many people as possible.
• Remember that politicians care about getting votes, keep reminding them that they will lose your vote unless they fight for the NHS.
• Don’t wait for the STP plan to have been revealed completely - protest NOW.
• Back any crowd-funding campaigns for court actions that support our NHS.
• Attend as many NHS protests and demonstrations as you can.
• Organise locally and let’s get a united force for the NHS going.
• Don’t forget how much a thankyou means to over-worked NHS staff.
NHS campaigns have set up in all areas of the UK and some have set up national campaigns. Many of these campaigns have had successes through protests, and court actions. There is no reason to believe that in East Sussex we can’t do the same

Please keep an eye on the website of this campaign

https://esussexsavethenhs.wordpress.com/

There is also a Facebook page for East Sussex Save the NHS Campaign and a Facebook group, East Sussex Save the NHS Campaign Forum. We are also on Twitter, follow us please @ESussexNHS

I am also trying to set up a small organising committee for the campaign and would very much like to have members from across East Sussex. This campaign risks becoming Eastbourne centric.

Please get in touch if you would like to be involved

lucette888@hotmail.co.uk

If you belong to an organisation and would like that organisation to be affiliated then let me know. If you would like me to come and give a talk to your group than please get in touch.

Thankyou