

Women's Network Exchange

NPC Women's Working Party
Issue 44 September 2018

This edition celebrates the first 70 years of the NHS and its many achievements. Let's hope that with proper funding our NHS can celebrate another 70 years and more but it won't be without a fight to prevent continued privatisation.

Nye Bevan's inspiration is important to us all. Remember his words ***"No society can legitimately call itself civilised if a sick person is denied medical aid because of a lack of means"***.

The same could be said for the NHS!

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Rosie MacGregor
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Defending healthcare services: Sirona Care Workers Strike in Bath

The funding crisis both in social care and the NHS is uppermost in our minds in the year that the NHS celebrates its 70th birthday.

UNISON, my union is responding to the crisis in health and social care by fighting privatisation, campaigning for improved funding, better quality social services and a system that treats both care workers and users with dignity.

It comes as no surprise that those who suffer most as a result of the crisis in adult social care are pensioners. The care system is at crisis point fueled by local authority cuts, poor leadership and staff shortages as well as dogmatic privatisation that puts profit before people.

Staff are leaving the NHS due to excessive workloads and poor pay and recruitment is not meeting demand. Social care is equally poorly funded with staff and those in their care all too frequently exploited. It contributes to bed blocking in the NHS when care home and home care services are inadequate.

I attended a rally to support and stand in solidarity with striking Sirona workers at Bath Guildhall on 12 July. The proposals to extend their working hours was unacceptable and Bath and North East Somerset together with Sirona must be realistic and find the necessary funding in the interests of staff and the dignity of those in their care. These already low paid workers were facing what amounted to a pay cut of £1,200 pa as a result of changes to shift patterns. It simply wasn't acceptable. Our heartfelt thanks go to them for

the work they do. The strike has since been called off after UNISON and Sirona reached an agreement pending consideration by the Council's Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel in September.

It's not all over yet!

Rosie MacGregor



Pictured are Roger McKenzie UNISON Assistant General Secretary and Joanne Kaye SW Regional Secretary and Vice-Chair SW TUC.

Another battle is being waged for decent pay for hospital workers at St Helier Hospital, Carshalton, where members of GMB demand a better pay deal. The regional organiser, Helen O'Connor, explained that workers suffer from understaffing and feel betrayed following the recent pay award that represents an average increase of only 1.5% for the most poorly paid. (Morning Star 15/8/18)

Janet Shapiro

The WWP at the NPC Pensioners Parliament June 2018

Lunch time Fringe meeting on June 13th. "Travelling Safely"



Susan Howe and Rosie MacGregor carried the Women's Working Party Banner to the opening rally on June 12th. (Sorry that only Susan's hands are visible)

Safer Travel was the subject of the Women's Working Party's fringe event at the NPC Pensioners' Parliament, held in Blackpool in June 2018.

Unfortunately the Renaissance Room, where the meeting took place, was at the top of a long staircase and the lift has been out of order for over a month so this prevented some pensioners, especially the wheelchair bound, from attending.

The leaflets* that had been designed, with much advice from British Transport Police (BTP), and the posters advertising the session had been lost in transit; nevertheless the session was found useful and enjoyable by those who attended.

Philip Corraan, a PhD student from Kings College London, spoke about travel for older and disabled persons. Two women officers from British Transport Police (BTP), pictured below, spoke to the meeting, answered questions and had brought their own leaflets; this was very helpful.

Generally, travel by train is a very safe form of public transport; keeping the guard on the train to deal with any incidents, including emergency situations, will help to keep it so.

Arlene Hansell

Rosie chaired the fringe and reports- It proved to be a well-attended and informative session with helpful advice provided by each of the speakers - two British Transport Policewomen who were able to answer questions and give advice and the main speaker Philip Corran, a sociologist from King's College, London who is carrying out research into travel. Rosie opened the meeting by stating that the greatest fear of crime, perhaps unsurprisingly, is felt by the under 20s and the over 55s. Crime on driver only trains has been shown to increase by 30%. Department for Transport figures suggest that if passengers felt safer, journeys by public transport would rise by 11%. Surely that has to be a good thing for the train and bus operators so why for example are train guards and station staff being removed leaving passengers feeling all the more vulnerable, especially when their presence alone acts as a deterrent. Operators need to be reminded that they owe a duty of care towards vulnerable passengers.



Philip Corran gave a comprehensive and informative talk on the experiences of those traveling in London from his detailed research paper. More people today are choosing to live in cities and this results in greater pressure on public transport. Ageing and disability are interlinked. One of the biggest shortcomings is accessible transport. Being unable to travel, or unable to travel safely, results in social exclusion, loneliness and isolation. Many stations aren't step free and there is a need to cross rails by footbridges when there are no lifts. Inconsistency leads to stress as does overcrowding of buses and trains with lack of seating or places to rest. All this results in fear, loss of independence and quality of life. There needs to be a cultural shift in the way we think about transport.

Rosie MacGregor



* The leaflet produced for this session with good advice as to how to travel safely can be obtained on request.

Health Matters update

In June Theresa May announced an increase of £20bn a year to the NHS's budget to signal the government's commitment to the health service ahead of its 70th birthday on July 5th.

Health campaigners claimed more funding was needed; on June 30th thousands descended on Whitehall to demand adequate funding.

On the same day government announced further cuts

to NHS services.

However, the NHS Bill was successfully tabled by Eleanor Smith MP backed by Jon Ashworth, shadow health secretary, on July 11th.

The 2nd reading is on Oct 26th.

<https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/nationalhealthservice.html>

Janet Shapiro

Women's Health Matters

Several sessions at the **NPC Pensioners Parliament** on Wednesday June 13th related to health and wellbeing. These were "Social Care: Time to bring about real change" in the morning and two in the afternoon "NHS: 70 years old and still growing strong?" & "Tackling loneliness".

A full report of all sessions can be obtained on request to the NPC office, by email at info@npcuk.org or posted to the address given on last page. If a printed copy is wanted this costs £1.

With the Care Green Paper delayed until the Autumn, NPC officers have been in contact with Health Campaigns Together (HCT), that is organising a special conference "The crisis in Social Care" on November 17th 10.30 – 4pm at St Lukes's Church Centre, Birmingham B15 2AT. See <https://healthcampaignstogether.com/socialcare.php>

Copies of the HCT newspaper No 11 will be available at the WWP Seminar on September 8th. It contains information on the campaign to save Liverpool Women's Hospital and lots more.

Contact healthcampaignstogether@gmail.com.

[The WWP seminar "Women's Health Matters" will take place in Liverpool on Saturday September 8th at Jack Jones House, Unite the Union, L3 8EF. (cost £7.50 towards the cost of a light lunch and administration.) Contact info@npcuk.org]

Reduction of in NHS services .

A consultation finishes soon on restrictions on medicines that GPs may prescribe to their patients.

In Camden London, women have found it difficult to book for breast screening, apparently caused by a national shortage of qualified mammographers.

Watch out for changes in the way GPs can refer patients for treatments important for older people, such as hip or knee replacement.

It is important to be informed about policies being adopted by your local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG); these could be challenged through the local borough council Scrutiny Panel.

Meanwhile hospital trusts come under strain because of staff shortages. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) warns that urgent action is needed to maintain safe levels of nursing staff.

Janet Shapiro

Abortion Rights

During the first week of July, I was fortunate enough to attend Unite the Union's 5th Policy Conference as a representative from the London and Eastern Unite Retired Members Committee

A number of emergency motions were submitted and as you would expect there was one submitted from the Irish Region welcoming the result of the referendum in the Republic of Ireland which had taken place on the 25th May of this year to repeal the 8th amendment to the constitution giving women the right to choose. Conference overwhelmingly congratulated the work of the Irish trade unions working in conjunction with political parties and community groups to achieve this historic victory.

Conference reiterated its long held belief that a woman's right to choose on the island of Ireland will not be over until women in Northern Ireland also have the right to choose without the threat of criminalisation and without the need to travel to either England or the Republic of Ireland and therefore called for the full decriminalisation of abortion and the extension of the 1967 act to Northern Ireland and support for our sisters in Gibraltar in their fight for the right to choose. I was fortunate enough to be able to speak at the rostrum, as possibly one of a small number of people at conference who remembered the act and some of the horror stories, women of our age will all recall. A woman's right to choose is of paramount importance and must be maintained

Lorene Fabian

Unite the Union

Coerced into giving up their babies.

Preceding legal reforms in the mid 1970s, an estimated half a million babies were adopted. Many of these were given up under coercion by "moral welfare officers".

Now women are coming forward to report their unhappy plight, brought about by poverty and shame. In November the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Salvation Army apologised for their role. Now a group of cross-party back benchers urges the government to issue an apology to these mothers. (Guardian 13/7/18)

Janet Shapiro

Nurse recruitment in 1948 and today.

Nurses of the Windrush

22 June is an historic day. It marks the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush from the Caribbean in Tilbury. It is also the day on which the NHS was formed. These two events are closely linked. Following WW2, there was a concerted recruitment drive by the British Government for nurses and health staff from the British Government to come to England and help staff the newly formed National Health Service. The NHS had been formed following years of campaigning and planning by Aneurin Bevan who looked to the creation of a high quality health service for the people of Britain free at the point of delivery and funded through general taxation. However, it became abundantly clear that in the aftermath of WW2 there was an acute shortage of health staff to fill the various positions. Aneurin Bevan was keen to ensure that the NHS that he envisaged would become a reality, hence the recruitment of staff from these Caribbean Commonwealth countries.

Caribbean nurses and new trainees

and other skilled and unskilled workers arrived en masse to bolster the workforce in the UK. Unfortunately, the British Government at the time had made no provision to receive them. Furthermore, the British people themselves were unprepared for the influx of migrants which included the health staff. As a result the nurses, midwives and other health staff did not receive the welcome they expected and deserved as invitees. Instead they found themselves in a largely hostile social and work environment. Stories abound of the many challenges the health staff faced. When they arrived, they were dispersed to their appointed hospitals all over the UK. Some were met at the station but many had to find their own way. At that time there were few Black people in Britain particularly in smaller towns. Consequently many nurses moved to larger centres like London, Liverpool and Bristol with existing Asian, African and Caribbean populations. There they endured problems of housing, prejudice, isolation, hardship, rejection and discrimination. Experiences in hospitals were varied. In general Caribbean nurses

were well received by patients but there were also examples of abuse and rejection. With regard to training most Caribbean like other Black nurses were placed on the 2 year State Enrolled Nurse (SEN) courses. Few were accepted on the State Registered Nurse (SRN) despite possessing the requisite qualifications. After their two year basic training most of the women found they could not get onto the high level course and certainly 'couldn't get promoted at all'.

Despite the many challenges they experienced as they tried to fulfil the duties they were assigned, the nurses persevered. They amassed a great deal of knowledge and satisfaction from nursing the sick and thrived against great odds. There is no doubt that nurses and health staff from the Windrush Generation, and those who arrived subsequently, not only contributed to the NHS, they helped to build the NHS as we know it. They did so through their dedication and commitment to their work and nursing careers and continue to do so to this day.

Ellen Lebetha

On Jan 23rd, the Royal College of Nurses (RCN) quoted from NHS Digital Statistics.

It was revealed that seven out of ten nursing vacancies remain unfilled in the North East. The number of vacant nursing jobs reached a new high in the quarter ending September 2017 with 954 vacant NHS nurse and midwifery posts advertised in the Northern region – an increase of some 29 on the previous quarter.

Glenn Turp, RCN Northern Regional Director declared that the situation was desperate. "Record pressure, lack of funding and poor pay are actively discouraging the next generation of British nurses. The NHS has never been busier and is losing highly experienced and skilled nurses far quicker than it can find and train new ones. Earlier cuts

to training places are exacerbating the problem, while cutting the nurse bursary is deterring others thinking of becoming a nurse just as long-serving staff are feeling demoralised and pushed to leave nursing. The Government cannot deny the staffing crisis in the NHS any longer."

Across England there were 34,260 vacant NHS nurse and midwifery posts advertised, an increase of 2,400 on the previous quarter. These figures come after analysis last week revealed that a greater number of nursing staff are leaving the NHS than joining. The latest data show that the NHS in the North East hired just 365 nurses for the 925 advertised posts - or just 39 per cent – leaving a massive shortfall in nurses and midwives.

In addition, June 2017 figures showed a 96% drop in nurses from the EU registering to practice in the UK, a figure which RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies said could have severe consequences for patients.

In her words: "Our nursing workforce is in a state of crisis, with more than 40,000 vacancies in England alone. Across our health service, from A&E to elderly care, this puts patients at serious risk. These figures should act as a wake-up call to the Government as they enter Brexit negotiations. EU staff should be left in no doubt that their contributions are welcome and valued."

From <https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/new-eu-nurse-figures-a-wake-up-call>

Janet Shapiro

Fair pay for all

From an analysis carried out by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) in August 2015, it is revealed that bosses' salaries are 145 times that of other workers.

Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in several companies have massively increased their remuneration since 2016 while their workers pay went up by 2% or less.

Business Committee Chair, Labour MP Rachel Reeves commented *"Excessive executive pay undermines public trust in business. When CEOs are happily banking ever larger bonuses while average work pay is squeezed, then something is going very wrong."* (Morning Star 15/8/18)

Janet Shapiro

Equal Pay and recognition

Well done Carrie Grace!

Carrie was the BBC China editor who discovered that she was being paid significantly less than male colleagues such as the North American editor.

Carrie bravely quit her job in January when she found out that she was being paid tens of thousands of pounds less than editors of the same rank.

She became the focal point of many other women working for the BBC who found that they too were being paid a lot less than their male counterparts.

An undisclosed sum, said to run to 6 figures, was the settlement the BBC agreed to in order to 'put right' the wrong.

Carrie is going to donate the money to the Fawcett Society for a fund which will provide women with legal advice on equal pay claims. The NUJ says it is already helping 180 female BBC staff to resolve claims over equal pay and this could just be the tip of the iceberg.

Marion Wilson

Not just in the BBC

Professional women are being urged to join forces.

Women at Birmingham City Council, retailers such as Morrisons, Asda, Tesco and Next have all pursued collective legal action to claim equal pay.

Because average pay at universities for men is higher than for women, feminists at Birkbeck, University of London are doing likewise. (THES p28 19/7/18)

To address the lack of women in senior roles, Aileen Fyle, University of St Andrews, reports that a new booklet called 'Academic Women Here!' has been published. This cites many factors that hold women back from promotion. (THES 15/7/18)

After a 10 year fight about gender discrimination a High Court action against the National University of Ireland, Galway, resulted in an amicable agreement for the 4 women claimants. (THES p18 2/8/18)

A study that compared staff gender balance with research publication and reputation showed a negative correlation. Middlesex University, London was the only institution with a 50:50 staff gender balance. The most prestigious institutions have the lowest proportion of female staff, all below 30%. (THES p22 12/7/18)

A group of female paleontologists in the United States have taken a media approach to push for equal recognition. They have posed with facial hair, individually designed beards and moustaches.

Their photos have appeared in exhibitions and in a documentary screened at LA Femme International Film Festival in 2017. (THES)

Janet Shapiro



National Assembly of Women

Weekend seminar for women
*Economic and social policies
that advance equality*
29-30 September

Saturday: The Future of work

Sunday: Valuing women and girls

Wortley Hall Sheffield S35 7DB

All in costs for the weekend, accommodation, meals
and all sessions: £60 single room, £40 shared.

Bookings and enquiries: naw@sisters.org.uk or post to
NAW, Bridge House, Newport Street, Hay on Wye,
Powys HR3 5BG

Cheques should be made out to "National Assembly of Women"

At the National Portrait Gallery (NPG)

Rebel Women: a year-long season of events at the NPG in 2018 to mark the centenary of women gaining the vote in Britain.

At the gallery you can follow the

REBEL WOMEN TRAIL

created to highlight the enduring influence of the Collection's female sitters.

A booklet guide will help you find portraits of women that have fought courageously and tirelessly for equality; to assert themselves as individuals and make their voices heard. As role models their heroic stories off strength, confidence and inspiration. There are other exhibitions across the country.

<https://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/rebel-women>

Or follow on twitter [#RebelWomen](https://twitter.com/RebelWomen)

Millicent Fawcett, Suffragist



As reported in Exchange 43, we now have a statue of Millicent Fawcett standing in Parliament Square. Around the plinth there are in addition pictures of many others, mostly women including suffragettes, who campaigned for women's right to vote. Millicent, as a suffragist—favoured non-violent protest. The bronze casting, by the artist Gillian Wearing, is the first statue of a woman erected in Parliament Square.

Photograph by Janet Shapiro

Mary on the Green

This is a campaign which has pushed for a statue of Mary Wollstonecraft to be erected in London and they have succeeded!

The well known sculptor Maggi Hambling has been chosen to produce the work which will be erected on Newington Green together with Mary's words "*I do not wish women to have power over men but over themselves.*"

The design shows an everywoman figure emerging from organic matter. Mary was born in London and received very little schooling.

Newington Green is where she started her writing career which included reviews, translations, children's books and most notably her book on "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" in 1792.

In it she said that girls and boys should be educated together at the expense of the state, the basis of our education today, and that women should be in Parliament. This was 100 years before the suffragettes!

She also argued that women are not naturally inferior to men but that they lack education. She and her sister set up a girls boarding school in Newington Green. This allowed her to rent a house where she was able to mix with the likes of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, Joseph Priestley and John Adams (the 2nd US President) and his wife.

Mary had a daughter Fanny by Gilbert Imlay, but later married William Godwin. She died after giving birth to Mary, later to be famous as Mary Shelley.

Mary Wollstonecraft is regarded as the mother of feminism and women's suffrage.

She is buried at Old St. Pancras church.

Her statue will be a welcome addition to London where 90% of statues are of men.

Marion Wilson

Echoes of Holloway Prison Holloway Prison has been an important landmark in Islington for over 150 years. Thousands of women passed through its doors until it closed in 2016. This exhibition explores their stories, open until Oct 8th at **Islington Museum**, 245 St John St. London EC1V 4NB, Mon-Sat (not Wed) 10-5pm free.

<https://echoesofhollowayprison.com/exhibition/> <https://echoesofhollowayprison.com/>

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