Minutes of Defend our NHS York (DoNHSY) Planning Meeting

The meeting was held on Saturday 7th September, 2013 from 12pm to 4pm at The Golden Ball, York.


Welcome and Introduction – Anne Leonard:

Anne opened the meeting with a few key points:

Although it has sometimes felt as if we're in the business of the 'management of forlorn hopes', never the less she suggested the group has succeeded in 'punching above our weight' pretty consistently - the best example being the April 6th Rally, which also demonstrated our other great success - regional networking.

Anne emphasised that the meeting is about maintaining that momentum in an inhospitable political landscape and climate, suggesting this as particularly important in the run up to the next general election.

Some Positives:

- The emergence of the People's Assembly
- The recent House of Commons vote not to invade Syria.

Anne expressed an opinion that the only hope for the survival of a recognised NHS is a political party capable of being influenced by a visible and audible tide of public opinion and with the power to have an impact.

The task of this meeting is to help develop an environment to create that tide to:

- Reach and activate a wider public
- Make it visible and audible
  - making fuller use of our website
  - fully utilising lists of sign-ups
  - optimising use of the press and media
- Suggested Immediate activities
  - The Demo at the Tory conference on 29th September
  - Lib-Dem Spring Conference in March, 2014 in York
    ▪ Rally the region!
    ▪ And how to achieve
  - Opposition to the EU/US Trade agreement - Urgent November deadline
- Supporting these activities:
  - The need to stress the economic importance of the NHS
    ▪ The way it has been the bedrock of national prosperity since WW2
    ▪ The loss to everyone’s standard of living (not only health) if it is eroded further
- Also recognising the complexity of the present structure and how it has already been compromised in ways that defy easy solutions.
- Thus need to focus on the 2012 Act and how it can be drained of its poison.
- We can take on the deeper, more complex problems once we are sure we still have an NHS that deserves the name.
Under housekeeping – Anne asked if we needed a bank account or continue with Malcolm acting as banker for our few funds. Malcolm confirmed there is £75.50 in the kitty, which has been accumulated by the active members of the group pooling resources as and when required. As most campaigns have a low cost, and the complications of opening a bank account, it was agreed this was the most sensible and practical solution for the current demands.

**Session 1: Review of DoNHSY aims and activities over the last 2 ½ years and Update on Developments since the passing of the H&SC Act** (Leader Chris Brace)

Chris split the period into 3 sectors:

**Pre Enactment**

This period included 2 marches, distribution of leaflets and inviting the general public to sign petitions.

**Post Enactment- Phase 1 – to current date**

Chris referenced the role of the Kings Fund in commenting on the bill. This can be reviewed here: [http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/never-again](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/never-again).

Reminder that the David Owen Bill is still on the table

Newsgroups and unions are beginning to listen
Membership of/working with the People’s Assembly is essential.

Chris pointed to several influential events during this period:
- **Spirit of 45**
- Failure of the role out of the 111 service
- Negative publicity on CCG’s and warning we may return to consolidation of local CCG’s that will result in something similar to the PCT’s. Comment: “how much will that process have cost?”
- Witnessing services privatised at a rapidly increasing rate

**Post Enactment – Phase 2 – what next**

Chris went onto suggest targets for the next phase, which he suggested is to develop a strategy as we move towards the next General Election and that issues identified are on the agenda. Chris asked the important question:

“What kind of health service are we aiming for?”

**Session 2: Networking: a review of our local, regional and national links and activities including contacts within the new NHS structure. Plans for developing them.** (Leader Gwen Vardigans)

Gwen produced a great list that enabled excellent discussions and identification of additional contacts under the different identified groupings. The following are the

Local Support Networks:
- People’s Assembly
- TUC and other Unions
- Local Political Parties and MP(s)
Local KNOP – Leeds, Hull, Sussex, Darlington, Durham

Community groups such as:
- Resident’s Associations
- Mother and Toddler

National Childbirth Trust

Other Groups:
- 38 Degrees (note we need to find a way to get in touch to send messages as well as receive)
- Avaaz
- Quakers

New NHS Structures:
- Local Healthwatch
  - York Healthwatch - http://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/
  - North Yorkshire - http://www.healthwatchnorthyorkshire.co.uk/
- Local CCGs
  - North York & Humber CCG - http://www.yorksandhumber.nhs.uk/
- Patient Forums
- York Council Health Overviews and Scrutiny Committee - http://democracy.york.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=671
- National Clinical Commissioners such as:
  - Nice - http://www.nice.org.uk/
- NHS England
- Department of Health National Procurement Committee
  - (discussions recognised the need to acknowledge the NHS ‘gravy train’ and address how this can be addressed – and probably applies across many disciplines)
- Treatment Advisory Groups
- National Audit Commission - http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/
- Care Quality Commission - http://www.cqc.org.uk
- Community for social care inspection - http://www.communitycare.co.uk/
- Patient Opinion https://www.patientopinion.org.uk/

Good discussions followed relating to some significant changes in the NHS delivery of health services noting areas to watch:

- Public health now fractured from NHS and now under control of local authorities
- The need to establish a view and ensure they are properly run with funding ring fenced to ensure these services remain properly funded

“Ensure a Properly Regulated Health Service”.

Session 3: Media Strategy – local and national including the BBC and IT networks. (Leaders: Anne Leonard and Graham Martin)

This session developed great discussions around the following summaries:
- Local papers to include: York Press, Northern Echo, Yorkshire Post, Yorkshire Evening Press, Professional magazines.
- Notice Boards on Hospitals
- For letter campaigns – ensure letters are sent from different people
- Develop questions for pub and other quizzes that raise awareness of the dangers of our future health provision
- Radio and TV interviews and/or features to generate awareness to as many members of the general public we can reach of the rapid changes underway:
  - Minster FM
  - BBC York
  - BBC Inside Out for Yorkshire and Humber (our region)
  - BBC Politics Show (local and maybe even national)
- Develop relationships with local contributors to national newspapers such as the Independent, Telegraph and Guardian...a few contact names were discussed.

The BBC are sensitive and respond to phone complaints on their coverage of any particular issue if it appears too weighted to one side of an argument. Corporations can generate such phone in campaigns. The question was discussed – can “people power” develop such a campaign when we hear ongoing negativity about the NHS.

The final message from this session was the need to clearly define:

“*What is the message we are sending?*”

**Session 4: The next few months – planning and organising the year ahead.** (Mick Phythian and Fiona Benson)

The meeting clearly identified the 29th September as the next major event when many groups are travelling to the Conservative conference.

The following were summarised as areas to focus on:

- Increase proactivity
- Identify and clearly define our underlying description that correctly portrays our message.
- Development of links to media, both local and national including:
  - Articles
  - Regular inputs
  - Letter writing
  - Email
  - Press Releases
- Review the document: *A new health service: what kind of health service do we want?* A discussion document authored by Sally Ruane and published by KNOP.
  - Review this document to identify key areas to focus on
  - Devote a meeting to finalise those key areas
  - Make that the focus of our energies at the 12 October People’s Assembly

**Important dates:**

Sept 19 – Publicity action with flyers 7.45am to 9.00am target the area around the Station Road/Station Rise/Rouger Street junction, outside Aviva, the new Council Offices.
Sept 26 – Meeting Sea Horse 6.30
Sept 29 – Manchester Conservative Conference: http://yorktonhs299.eventbrite.co.uk/
Oct 12 – People's Assembly
Nov 5 – Civil Disobedience

2014
Mar 7-9 – Lib/dem conference York
June – European Elections
Nov – Completion of EU/US Trade agreement