



Briefing 1

Nov 1st NHS Together Lobby

Sep 18 2006

NHS Together Lobby of Parliament

This is the first briefing about the lobby of parliament organised by NHS Together for Wednesday Nov 1st. Further updates will be available at www.nhstogether.org.uk.

About NHS Together

NHS Together brings together all the health unions (including those who are not affiliated to the TUC - the BMA, RCN and RCM) together with the TUC to defend the NHS. The campaign celebrates the advances made by the NHS in recent years, but says these are now under threat from budget cuts; too rapid and untested change introduced without staff consultation or commitment; and fragmentation caused by a dash to the private sector.

The campaign was launched at a meeting at the TUC Congress and continues with a Labour Party Conference fringe. Regional events, such as the demonstration in Nottingham on September 23rd, are being organised around the country. The first major national mobilisation is a lobby of parliament on November 1st.

The purpose of the lobby

The lobby will give frontline health workers the opportunity to press their concerns to MPs of all parties. The objective is not simply to get a good turn out, but ensure that we cover as many MPs as possible and involve the whole range of NHS staff. NHS Together unions will want to work out at the local level how best to ensure this happens. If you want to join the lobby you should liaise with your own union and make sure all the NHS Together unions are working together in your workplace.

Publicity

As the aim is to get a representative lobby from across the country, we are not producing bulk copies of leaflets at a national level. Individual unions may produce material for their own members, but we also want to encourage local publicity. We are therefore publishing a pdf of a leaflet that can be downloaded and adapted for local use, and artwork for the logo. The text of the leaflet has been agreed by

consensus among all the NHS Together unions at a national level. Any variation to it would need to be similarly agreed at local or regional level.

Events on the day

Security concerns mean that the actual number of lobbyists allowed in the main Parliament building is limited. NHS Together has therefore also booked Central Hall Westminster (a short walk from the Palace of Westminster). This will act as our base for the day. It will have catering facilities; contact points so that individual unions can brief and meet their members; and we will hold a rolling rally in the main meeting hall. Speakers are currently being arranged.

Meeting your MP

Because of the security limits it is not possible to make appointments with MPs in advance, but lobbyists should still write to their MP in advance to tell them that they would like to meet them on the day. It is possible that the MP may offer to meet in one of Parliament's other buildings where timed meetings are possible, or that they will not be available. Otherwise lobbyists should first report to Central Hall Westminster (from 11am) and will then have to join the queue to enter Parliament. Once in the Central Lobby they fill in a form that will be taken to their MP. It would make sense for those with the shortest distance to travel to try and get there early.

Not everyone can come to London mid-week. Most MPs hold constituency surgeries where you can also raise the future of the NHS, and you may like to invite local MPs to meet staff at NHS workplaces that cover patients from their constituencies.

Reporting Back

It is important that lobbyists report back the results of meetings with MPs. NHS Together and individual unions will be providing briefing to help make meetings as effective as possible, and we will shortly provide facilities via the website for people to report back on meetings with MPs whether as part of the national lobby or elsewhere.

Transport

Transport will be co-ordinated by NHS Together unions at the regional level. TUC regions will ensure that unions are working together. The website www.nhstogether.org.uk will provide transport – and other – details in the weeks ahead.