

NHS AND US

The British public have elected to keep the Conservative government in power. During the campaign each party made the NHS an election priority, and each in turn made outlandish promises. George Osborne promised a further £2 billion in funding for the NHS 2015/16. The NHS final accounts for 2014-15 are not yet published, but point to a large deficit, therefore the amount of new money available will be significantly less. Money can certainly help the NHS, but only if spent wisely. In recent years money has been wasted on badly thought out incentives with poor management. It is difficult for clinical staff not to feel demoralised if they cannot see new initiatives of benefit to the patient or workplace.

The coverage of the NHS dominated the media; and for once, journalists were asking NHS workers what they thought could be done to fix the NHS. Interestingly, whatever their political alliance, and whatever their job - be it porter or hospital consultant, they were united in what's wrong with the NHS - the list is long.....

Everyone is under pressure, all employees agree the NHS as it stands is not sustainable. It is being propped up by goodwill; staff work through lunch-breaks, take work home and stay late. There are fewer clinical staff at the coal face. Departments are run from a top down approach rather than involving the workers. Shrinking budgets are leading to instability within the workplace and staff are not supported. Primary and secondary care are under pressure, with more patients coming through the doors, more tests, more treatment and more monitoring needed; the interface between them is disjointed. The NHS is often used inappropriately by swathes of the population with multiple chronic issues; social, physical and psychological problems that cannot be resolved with a quick fix.

The NHS is political dynamite, perhaps we should think about removing this explosive device from the politicians. It is too important to play with matches every five years. The NHS has become a mesh of work- overload and demoralised staff, it will take years to untangle and restore it to running efficiently, and needs long term planning by individuals who understand the NHS inside out.

It is difficult to be rational about the NHS, we are dealing with people; your brother or sister, your father or mother. How can we place an economic value on someone's life when they have the bad luck to suffer illness and disease? Yet in reality there has to be some kind of economic adding up.

Despite all the problems cited by health workers, they unanimously remained proud of *their* NHS, and hopeful that it would become a better place to work in. Let's hope the elected government will recognise a long term strategy is the way forward to start fixing the NHS; no more sound bites, we need actions not words.