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CAMPAIGNERS TRIUMPHANT

Lewisham Hospital's victory is 'so just and so right'



Emotional: Director of children's services at Lewisham Healthcare Trust Tony O'Sullivan hugs wife Olivia ahead of the High Court verdict

Picture: Simon Way

Dr Louise Irvine celebrating the victory LC78384



PLANS to downgrade Lewisham Hospital's A&E department and help rescue a neighbouring health trust from financial meltdown were met with disbelief, fury and defiance.

by MARK CHANDLER

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Months of campaigning have followed that dark October day, including two truly stunning marches attended by thousands of protesters.

Last week, all that effort paid off.

Lewisham Hospital campaigners have defeated the Government in court and saved our health services.

Save Lewisham Hospital campaign leader Dr Louise Irvine said: "When we first

started, we were 12 people in a room thinking 'What can we do?' and feeling hopeless.

"But this was so just and so right. That's why it resonated with people. We reached every corner, nook and cranny of the community."

Turn to page 5 for more

A LONG ROAD TO VICTORY

2012	2013									
OCT 8 News Shopper first reports fears Lewisham Hospital's A&E could close following a TSA report.	OCT 29 TSA report recommends closure of Lewisham's A&E.	OCT 30 1,000 people sign a petition by MP Heidi Alexander in the space of one day.	NOV 24 More than 15,000 take part in a protest march	JAN 8 TSA final report says there are no 'viable alternative solutions' to the recommendations.	JAN 10 Lewisham Hospital dominates a broadcast of BBC's Question Time from Goldsmiths.	JAN 26 More than 25,000 people attend a second protest march through Lewisham.	JAN 31 Jeremy Hunt approves the plans. His claim Lewisham will keep a 'smaller' A&E is branded a sham.	MAR 8 Lewisham Council applies for a judicial review of the decision. Campaigners later follow suit.	JUL 2 High Court action begins.	JUL 31 The hospital downgrades are ruled unlawful and quashed.

Victory... but the battle continues

Lewisham emerged victorious against the Government last week after the High Court quashed Jeremy Hunt's unlawful decision to downgrade hospital A&E and maternity services.

MARK CHANDLER finds out more

IN HIS July 31 ruling Judge Stephen Silber said the Secretary of State for Health was in breach of the National Health Service Act 2006 when he announced to Parliament services at Lewisham Hospital would be downgraded.

Lewisham Council and the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign successfully argued the minister and Trust Special Administrator (TSA) had no powers to downgrade the hospital's A&E and maternity units after the financial collapse of the neighbouring South London Healthcare Trust (SLHT).

But amid jubilant scenes at the High Court – including a round of applause for Judge Silber on delivering his ruling – there was a warning the Government has asked for leave to appeal against the decision.

Save Lewisham Hospital campaign chairwoman and local GP Dr Louise Irvine said afterwards: "This is an incredible day.

"We are delighted for every single person who has supported the campaign and those who will now continue to benefit from this extraordinary hospital.

"The support from thousands of people in Lewisham is a very real demonstration of the big society."

Despite being appointed TSA for the SLHT, in his final report to the Secretary of State in January, Matthew Kershaw not only proposed changes to the SLHT but also to Lewisham Healthcare Trust, in particular to Lewisham Hospital.

But Judge Silber ruled the TSA and Health Secretary did not have the power to make recommendations and decisions about Lewisham

Hospital, that the area's GPs had not supported the move and no regard was made to obtaining their support.

He added the Health Secretary could not claim he would have reached the same decision using alternative powers.

A spokesman for the Department of Health said: "We expect to continue other elements of that package of changes, including the dissolution of the South London Healthcare NHS Trust, planned for October 1 – although there are a number of steps to go before that can take place."

The TSA said a planned merger between Lewisham Healthcare NHS Trust and Queen Elizabeth Hospital was still on course and it was business as usual at both sites.

● For more on this story, go to newsshopper.co.uk



Campaigners celebrated victory at the High Court

LC78275

WHAT THEY SAID



MAYOR of Lewisham Sir Steve Bullock: "This is a real victory for people in Lewisham, for Londoners and everyone who remains committed to our National Health Service."



TONY O'Sullivan, director of children's services at Lewisham Healthcare Trust: "We dared to hope, because, first of all, the decision to downgrade such a good hospital was clearly perverse by most people's standards."



LEWISHAM East MP Heidi Alexander: "It brought the community together in a way I could never have imagined. On a personal level I feel proud and very honoured to have played a small part in it."



LEWISHAM Deptford MP Joan Ruddock: "This is the greatest victory for a community campaign I have seen in my political life."



ELTHAM MP Clive Efford: "The Government should have acted in the interest of patients and working with the South London Healthcare Trust to manage the deficit, not placed it into administration."

Boris presses ahead with fire station closures

LONDON'S mayor has overruled the fire authority and ordered the closure of 10 fire stations – including Downham and Woolwich.

The plans, which would save £28.8m and cut 552 jobs, had been rejected by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.

But Boris Johnson has ordered the cuts to go ahead anyway,

saying he wants the plans implemented by September 16.

In his decision notice, the Mayor said the money could not be found elsewhere and that "Front-line savings can be made without affecting public safety".

Fire Brigades Union executive member for London Ian Leahair said: "The cuts are dangerous and wrong.

"This is devastating news for Londoners with lives across the capital being put at risk by the Mayor's reckless cuts.

"It's also an affront to democracy."

Following a consultation process, the original plans were changed to remove the closure of News Cross and Clapham stations.



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