

## **REINSTATE CHARLOTTE CAMPAIGN: PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **NHS campaigners rally support for sacked Whipps Cross whistleblower during Employment Tribunal**

Campaigners and trade unionists will gather outside an Employment Tribunal on January 20<sup>th</sup> to call for the reinstatement of Charlotte Monro, an Occupational Therapist and union leader sacked from her post at Whipps Cross hospital, where she worked for 26 years.

Charlotte's union Unison is bringing the case to tribunal claiming that Charlotte was wrongfully dismissed by Barts Health Trust in July 2013 after informing Waltham Forest council of staff concerns about the effects on patients of closing beds at Whipps Cross hospital's stroke unit.

Barts has been facing spending cuts in order to service huge repayments on the private finance initiative (PFI) deal that funded the rebuilding of the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel.

Charlotte was acting in the best interests of her patients and staff, but Barts accused her of "bringing the trust into disrepute". They also dismissed her for discussing with staff job threats she had been informed of as their union representative. Late in the process, The Trust added an allegation over non-disclosure, 26 years before, of protest-related convictions in the '60s and '70s. We are clear that Charlotte was dismissed for her union activities and for speaking out. A Barts spokeswoman's claim that for patient safety they "had no alternative but to take action against Ms. Monro" is absurd and deeply unjust. Far from a threat to patients she has contributed much to improving safety, providing excellent care over a long, successful career.

Charlotte's professional body considered an allegation over her past convictions, and concluded that there is no case to answer, recognising that the convictions date back a long time and have a specific historical context. In light of Charlotte's long and distinguished career, whilst her convictions should have been declared earlier, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) fully upheld her right to continue to practice as an Occupational Therapist.

Unison and local campaigners hope the tribunal, to be held in Docklands from 19-23 January, will find that she was wrongfully dismissed.

Unison General Secretary Dave Prentis said that Charlotte was a "long serving and respected health worker" and that "No employer should be allowed to act in this way".

Reinstate Charlotte campaigner Norma Dudley said: "All that Charlotte did was represent her union members and draw the attention of the local council and the community to the consequences of proposed cuts and service changes at Whipps Cross. Barts Health Trust actions have created a climate of fear seen to be aimed at keeping NHS workers quiet about cuts to services and union members cowed into submission over pay and conditions. The call to reinstate Charlotte is part of a determined drive by staff, unions and the local campaigns to change this culture that is incompatible with care. At a time of national crisis in the NHS it is more vital than ever that NHS staff are able to speak out against the damaging effects of cuts on the health of the patients in their care".

A petition calling to reinstate Charlotte and end the bullying climate at Barts is attracting widespread support. A culture of bullying where staff feared consequences if they spoke out was revealed in a CQC inspection of Whipps Cross Hospital in November 2013. Barts is struggling to cope with the effects of the coalition's extensive NHS reforms and the severe cuts to social care services that have now led to the A&E crisis across England. Earlier this month, Whipps Cross was turning ambulances away from A&E due to lack of beds at the hospital where outpatient operations had to be cancelled to free up space.

#### **Notes to Editors:**

1. Charlotte Monro was an Occupational Therapist working in the NHS for 35 years prior to her dismissal by Barts Health NHS Trust in 2013. Charlotte has been Chair of her Unison branch for many years and Staff Side Chair at Whipps Cross Hospital. When Whipps Cross - the only general hospital in the London Borough of Waltham Forest - was threatened with closure in 2007,

- Charlotte took a leading role in a successful campaign to save the hospital for which she was given an award by the Trust Board at the time, as reported [here](#).
2. Barts Health NHS Trust (BHT) is England's largest NHS trust serving much of East London. Whipps Cross is one of six hospitals operated by BHT. The new buildings at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel were funded by the biggest private finance initiative (PFI) deal in the NHS. A smaller PFI deal was used to fund Newham Hospital, also run by BHT. BHT now has the highest PFI debt in the country. PFI debt repayments are widely held to destabilise finances within the NHS and other public services. Barts Health Trust continues to struggle to recruit and retain staff following the mass down-banding and poor CQC report about Barts Health in November 2013. For previous coverage see [here](#) and [here](#). See [here](#) coverage of the A&E crisis at Whipps Cross.
  3. Charlotte Monro's Employment Tribunal will take place from Monday 19th January for up to five days with a decision expected by Friday 23rd January. There will be a support gathering on Tuesday 20th January from 09.30 to 10.00 outside Anchorage House, Clove Crescent, London E14 2BE
  4. The Reinstate Charlotte Campaign aims to clear Charlotte Monro's name and calls for an end to bullying at Barts health Trust. NHS budgets and services are being cut across the country. In this climate the importance of staff and staff representatives being free to speak out to maintain good quality patient care has been clearly demonstrated by events at Mid-Staffs Hospital
  5. Petition to reinstate Charlotte Monro: <https://www.change.org/p/peter-morris-reinstate-charlotte-monro-end-the-bullying-climate-in-the-nhs>
  6. There has been extensive press coverage of Charlotte's story and intense public interest.

**Local press coverage:**

[Health service campaigners say trust was "determined to get" Charlotte Monro](#)

[The tribunal of a woman once hailed a 'champion' of Whipps Cross Hospital will begin today](#)

[Charlotte Monro had been hailed as one of Whipps' "greatest champions" has lost her appeal](#)

[Charlotte Monro says her treatment reflects growing climate of intimidation at Barts Trust](#)

[An employment tribunal for a campaigner dismissed from Whipps Cross Hospital has been adjourned until January](#)

**London-wide coverage:**

[Barts suspends union leader as 1,000 staff compete to keep jobs](#)

[Barts must reverse Union activist's sacking, say GPs](#)

**National coverage:**

[Polly Toynbee in The Guardian on whistleblowers and the climate of fear in the NHS](#)

7. Waltham Forest Save Our NHS (WFSO NHS) supports Charlotte Monro and the aims of the Reinstate Charlotte Campaign. WFSO NHS is a community campaign that exists to support the NHS in Waltham Forest to continue as a not-for-profit public service, free to all users at the point of delivery, and funded through taxation. The group was established in November 2012 by a group of Waltham Forest residents and is not affiliated to, or supported by any political party. Membership of the group is open to all residents of Waltham Forest who support the purposes of the group. The group aims to raise public awareness of any local or national changes to the National Health Service and to challenge any service changes or cuts that threaten the quality of healthcare in Waltham Forest.

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