**Letter to the Mayor, Cabinet and Councillors**

**Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign
10 January 2017**

Dear Mayor, Cabinet and Councillors

**The procurement of the Health Visiting, School Nursing and Family Nurse Partnership NHS Services in Lewisham**

We are writing to you from the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign. As you will remember we petitioned you opposing cuts to the school nursing and health visitor services in August and September this year. We were very disappointed on behalf of staff and families affected by the cuts that you voted to uphold at that time.

We are now writing to you about the tendering of these services. Whilst we regret the compulsory tendering of health services by councils and the expensive disruption that that entails, we urge you to consider the following points:

**We ask you strongly to retain the Lewisham & Greenwich Trust option**
We urge you to look at the benefit of the long history of local Lewisham partnerships and networks between community services, the Council, GPs, the hospital and mental health services. Keeping the services with the local providers avoids disruption, fragmentation and potential degradation of these services.

Lewisham & Greenwich NHS Trust and the local NHS trusts that preceded it have provided these services to a high quality for many decades. The services are held in high esteem by partner agencies and by service users. The NHS staff who provide these services are trained by the NHS and have gained their expertise through working in the NHS. It costs £70,000 to train a student nurse for 3 years and more to provide postgraduate training and experience. The NHS invests in its workforce and staff are very loyal and proud to be part of the NHS.

**Lewisham Health Visitors were recently awarded UNICEF breastfeeding friendly status which is difficult to achieve and a reflection of the high standards of care offered to mothers in Lewisham.**

We are very hopeful that you award the current providers – rather than the the disruption of awarding to outside trusts, social enterprise or even the private sector – will be considered because of all the points made above.

**Privatisation**
The people of Lewisham told the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign (SLHC) repeatedly over the last 3 years that they want the NHS to continue to provide all aspects of community and hospital physical and mental health care in Lewisham to maintain the quality and integrity of this complex network of services. 3500 people wrote to Monitor and signed a petition expressing this in 2014.

We urge you not to consider private tenders. These will inevitably be based on cost not quality, and we hope you will not accept privatised health care in Lewisham. This will fragment services and hinder effective partnership working as staff follow different rules and policies, dictated by lowered costs and commercial priorities rather than service quality. This will increase the safeguarding risks for children and vulnerable parents as nurses, doctors and therapists all providing health care will have different record keeping systems and policies. The private sector does not invest in training health care staff or investing in services in the longer term as contracts are awarded for limited periods.

Lewisham, like other London boroughs, has high cost housing which is affecting recruitment of health workers and this will be exacerbated by a private contractor running community health care as they will not offer NHS pay and conditions or the NHS pension scheme which will be a further disincentive to work in Lewisham .

Health Visitors, School Nurses and Family Nurses have told SLHC that they want to continue being employed by the NHS in Lewisham as they believe this is in the best interests of the children and their families in Lewisham.

**The SLHC calls on Mayor and Cabinet to continue to support the delivery of our Community children’s services by Lewisham & Greenwich NHS Trust as we believe that their proven track record and commitment to these services makes them best placed to deliver them**

With best wishes

**Olivia O’Sullivan, Secretary
on behalf of**

**The Save Lewisham Hopsital Campaign**