**Press release on behalf of Lewisham Save Our NHS- - Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign**

**- for IMMEDIATE use**

**Lewisham NHS campaigners talk to shoppers about concerns over NHS**

On Saturday, March 9th, NHS staff and campaigners from national organisation *Keep Our NHS Public* **[1]** took part in 25 events across England to mark a national 'Day of Action'**.[2]** These emergency protests were called to draw public attention to the reasons for the crisis in the NHS and show solidarity with NHS workers fighting for better pay and conditions. Protests included NHS staff, as well as a patients and members of the public.

Action will also coincide with the launch of *Keep Our NHS Public*’s new campaign calling on the government to ‘Restore a People’s NHS.’ **[3]** This is defined as a return to a well-funded/staffed and fully comprehensive NHS, in line with its founding principles.

Campaigners and NHS staff are seeking to highlight the seriousness of the problem in response to the immediate and seemingly perpetual NHS crisis which has resulted in a waiting list of 7.6m people, unacceptable and dangerous delays in accessing emergency care, and widespread industrial action by doctors demanding restorative pay. They hope this will draw renewed attention to an issue that is in danger of being normalised, and force the government to respond.

In Lewisham Centre on Saturday 9 March twenty campaigners made speeches, gave out leaflets and encouraged members of the public to fill out postcards to our local MPs calling for more NHS funding and an end to increasing privatisation of services. There was a very good response from shoppers including an 85 year old who told the public over the microphone that he remembered the joy when they NHS came in and his regret now that its was more and more inaccessible, and that more services were being privatised.

**Dr John Puntis, Co-Chair of Keep Our NHS Public, says:**

*"In what is now the run up to a general election politicians should take heed that the poor state of the NHS is the number one concern of voters. Despite government’s misleading claims of record funding, unprecedented numbers of staff vacancies related to a lack of long-term planning and poor pay and conditions together with years of underfunding relative to demand have brought the service to its knees. Evidence shows that there is no better model of health care than the NHS when it is properly funded. What is now needed is investment to the level of European neighbours in a publicly provided NHS, a focus on staff retention, and addressing the huge deficit in capital funding that has resulted in crumbling, inadequate facilities and worn-out equipment. Without this, the NHS cannot treat patients in a timely and effective manner. March 9th will see KONP groups around the country highlighting these issues to members of the public and arguing that there is an alternative, as set out in our Vision for a People’s NHS.”*

**Louise Irvine, Chair of your Lewisham Save Our NHS (formerly Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign, said:**

*"As a GP in Lewisham and Chair of the Campaign that kept Lewisham Hospital open 10 years ago, I know how passionate people in Lewisham are about their hospital and the NHS. At present, people can’t see a GP when they want to – but please realise that this is because government funding for GPs has not kept pace with demand, doctor training has not been expanded as promised and staff are burnt out and stressed because it is hard to meet patients’ needs.”*

**[ends]**

Spokespeople are available for interview (subject to availability).
Contact: Olivia O’Sullivan, Co Secretary Lewisham Save Our NHS, savelewishamhospital@yahoo.com 07956590773

**Notes to editors**

1. *Keep Our NHS Public* is a national independent organisation campaigning for a well-funded, publicly owned and provided NHS www.keepournhspublic.com
2. For more information on the Day of Action including links to other local events, see: <https://keepournhspublic.com/event/national-day-of-action/>
3. Restore a People’s NHS <https://keepournhspublic.com/peoplesnhs/>