

unite Executive Council Elections

Amicus Section—Health Sector



Challenging Patricia Hewitt on plans to privatise primary care, July 2006

These elections matter.

Unite is a mainly private sector union, with Health members in a small minority. On the new Executive Council—the ruling body of the Union—there will be only two Health representatives, out of eighty people in total.

We don't even know what rights the Health sector of the union will have until the new rule book is agreed.

The danger is that the interests of our members in Health (and in our professional groups such as the CPHVA) will be overlooked in a large general union.

It is essential that we elect Executive Council members who are strong, assertive and experienced advocates for our members in Health.

Vote for Gill George

The NHS in England is in real trouble. Many of us in primary care are reeling from financial crisis, the redundancies and restructuring from 'Commissioning a Patient-Led NHS', and the growing threat of outsourcing to 'Autonomous Provider Organisations', social enterprise or private sector companies.

Community nursing might be less 'glamorous' than the image of hospital nursing promoted by the media, but it makes a real difference to peoples' lives. The Government—and far too many senior managers in the NHS—have no understanding of the complex professional roles of our members in the CPHVA.

It's clear that community nursing is increasingly seen as a 'soft touch' when it comes to cuts. Health visiting, school nursing and district nursing are all under attack. Posts have been deleted or left unfilled. 'Skill mix' has often been driven by cost, not by the needs of a high quality service. Case loads have spiralled out of control, with some health visitors reporting caseloads as high as 1000 children!

Historically, health visiting and school nursing have been universal services. The health promotion and preventative work of these professionals has been of central importance. Now, in many areas, services are 'targeted' - meaning, inevitably, that too many vulnerable children and families fall through the net.

"Gill's greatest strength on the National Executive is she stands by her principles. She has been unwavering in her support for our members."

Janet Moir, CPHVA (outgoing NEC member)

In Scotland, the NHS is in better shape—but the review of community nursing is a real threat to the professionalism of our members. In Northern Ireland, reorganisation leaves many of our members insecure.

A strong CPHVA, able to campaign hard for its members and in defence of services, is more important than it ever has been. It is a tragedy that the dual role of the CPHVA—as professional body and trade union—has been so poorly understood in Amicus. The reality of the last four years is a steady decline in the autonomy and influence of the CPHVA. This has gone hand in hand with the overall erosion of lay control in our Union.

This is unacceptable, and must be challenged.

Gill is happy to attend CPHVA or Unite meetings to explain why she is standing, to answer questions, and to discuss members' concerns. To get in touch e-mail her at gill@ghg.me.uk or ring her on (020) 7502 6905.

For more information see the websites gillgeorge.wordpress.com and www.uniteneclections.com.

Gill's record

Gill believes she has made a difference as a member of the Amicus NEC — and that she can continue to do so on the new Unite Executive.

As a Speech and Language Therapist working with children with special needs, Gill understands the pressures health workers face. She is the Senior Unite Rep in her Trust, representing members from Estates to the CPHVA. As Staff Side Secretary, she leads Trust unions in joint working.

As a founding signatory of *'Keep Our NHS Public'*, she set up a successful local group. She speaks at public meetings to defend the NHS up and down the country. She spoke at the 2007 TUC in defence of the NHS.

As an active member of the Health Sector National Committee, she has drafted Union responses to Government consultations.

On the Amicus NEC, Gill has ensured Health issues are not ignored. She successfully initiated:

- Affiliation and support for *'Keep Our NHS Public'*.
- An emergency motion to the TUC opposing Commissioning a Patient-Led NHS—forcing the Government into a significant retreat.
- Alerting the Union to secret Government plans to privatise primary care, leading to the formation of *'NHS Together'*
- Setting defence of the NHS as a campaign priority for the whole Union in 2008.
- Defending our professional organisations when moves were made to close them down.

Needed: A Union that puts its members first

Government policies introducing 'the market' to healthcare threaten us all.

In primary care, we're seeing a steady drift towards out-sourcing—through the commissioner-provider split, 'arms length management' and 'autonomous provider organisations', and increasing talk of social enterprise companies or out-and-out privatisation.

In England in the last two years, we've lost 26,000 NHS jobs. We now have increased workloads and increased stress. Job satisfaction has plummeted. Reorganisation has become a way of life. And we've been landed with a pay award less than half the rate of inflation.

Why on earth has our Union decided that our priority is 'two years peace for Gordon Brown'? This makes no sense at all.

"Gill understands what it's like on the front line in primary care. She's been very supportive of our campaign to save community nursing services. I'll be voting for her."

Norma Dudley, Health Visitor

Frank Wood is also standing for election to the new Unite Executive.

Frank is a strong candidate. He is Chair of the London Health Sector Committee, and a leading member of the Health Sector National Committee. He is Chair of the Joint Staff Committee in his Trust.

Frank is an activist and a campaigner. He is Chair of his local 'Keep Our NHS Public' group, and has played a key role in building a joint campaign of public sector unions, local activists and mental health groups, working together to defend desperately needed mental health services. Frank has a long history of opposing privatisation of the NHS.

Frank believes the NHS should be a good employer. Instead, we are overworked, facing re-organisation, redundancy or transfer, disadvantaged and abused.

Frank wants a Union that engages with its members in Health, works for those members—and that will challenge the Government when necessary.

Frank Wood

