

# Victory! Hospital to reopen!

UNISON members and campaigners are set to celebrate the re-opening of Oxford's Community Hospital this autumn as an NHS hospital - after an 18 month closure which threatened to become permanent.

## How did UNISON help win OxComm's re-opening?



UNISON members at the hospital played a key role in campaigning with the union to build pressure for its reopening - PCT Convenor and Branch Secretary Mark Ladbrooke explains.

*"Within an hour of the indefinite closure being announced union members working at OxComm were at the surgery of Andrew Smith MP explaining the issue and winning his support."*

Working with the UNISON branch Labour Link officer Abdul Rahman, members briefed the Oxford City representative on the Council Health Scrutiny Committee (Cllr Joe Mc Manners). They reported the impact on older patients and their friends and families from Oxford City who no longer had reasonable access to a community hospital having to travel across the county to other hospitals. Later the Labour Party with the Greens put a resolution to Oxford City Council calling for the reopening of the hospital - it was passed unanimously and the council went on to organise a public meeting in the city.

## UNISON builds links with community groups.



We rapidly recognised the importance of building a broad alliance to win the reopening of the hospital. We looked at groups particularly affected - community hospitals treat mainly older patients so we spoke to pensioner groups and groups representing older people among ethnic minorities (because Commissioners had not taken into account their equality duties). UNISON's Black Members Group played a key role in helping build this link. Mr Preedy from the West Indies Day Centre and his colleagues proved to be formidable champions of our cause.

The union worked with community groups and local politicians, particularly around the many lobbies of the council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (whose job it is to check that good quality health services are being provided for the community). We gained support from across the political spectrum.



A LINKS group was also being set up which allowed local people to have a say on health and social care issues. It is a useful forum particularly for retired workers. [www.makesachange.org.uk](http://www.makesachange.org.uk)



## Working with other unions and campaign organisations.

The PCT Joint Union Committee (stewards from all NHS unions) and the Oxford & District Trade Union Council (representing all local unions) were both supportive, notable was the strong contribution from a young occupational therapist steward. The radical campaign organisation 'Keep Our NHS Public' threw its weight and activists into this campaign even threatening in the end to work with its sister organisation 'NHS Unlimited' to mount a legal challenge to the closure of the hospital. This organisation reinforced UNISON's point - not only should a community hospital be reprovided but it should be an **NHS hospital** providing healthcare to **NHS standards** with **NHS staff**.

**Media** The campaigning and regular press releases got the attention of the local media including the Oxford Mail and BBC they reported the local campaign prominently. The branch newspaper ORGANISER also ran the story regularly.

Members and campaigners were on the branch email list and reports were posted on the website. Also we did some petitioning and we began experimenting with new media like utube. Picture: Joe Richards, a leader of the UNITE retired car workers branch records an interview



**Why we won** We achieved the hospital reopening as an effective alliance of union members working in OxComm, union organisation, community groups, political leaders and campaign organisations. Every part was needed. Everyone worked well together ... **and we'll party together at the re-opening!**