

‘NHS has reached real crisis-point’

THE NHS has reached a “real crisis point” and needs a huge reset, according to a concerned Colchester councillor who has thrown her support behind striking nurses.

Labour councillor Pam Cox, who is vying to become the city’s next MP, visited the picket line outside Colchester Hospital yesterday.

During her appearance she spoke with frontline workers who say they have been left with no choice but to down tools and join a two-day strike.

Speaking at the picket line Pam said: “I am supporting the nurses for lots of reason.

“I come from a nursing family - my two older sisters are nurses and my mother was a nurse so it is steeped in my family.

“Nurses would not come out on strike lightly and the fact the Royal College of Nursing does not have a history of striking but feels compelled to do this is telling.

“The NHS has reached a real crisis point and it now needs a new funding settlement and a new work plan and training needs reorganising.

“We need better pay for staff and we need to make an effort to retain staff because retention is a problem due to working conditions becoming intolerable.”

Widespread strikes to be staged

STRIKES are set to be held by a number of workers in disputes driven by concerns over pay and conditions.

Nurses are set to walk out again on February 6 and 7 while teachers are set to down tools on February 1 and March 15 and 16.

NHS physiotherapy staff across England will strike on Thursday and February 9.

The on-going rail dispute will see train drivers belonging to Aslef striking on February 1 and 3 affecting passengers across 15 rail companies.

Staff across 150 universities are due to hold 18 days of strikes in February and March with the first confirmed strike date as February 1.

Around 100,000 civil servants are to strike on February 1 with union members in 124 government departments along with several other bodies set to walk out.

The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) is calling for a ten per cent pay rise, better pensions, job security and no cuts to redundancy terms.

Ambulance staff at seven trusts in England and all of Wales will also walk out on February 6 and 20 although no action has been agreed in the East of England.

PICKETER SAYS STRIKE AIMS TO SAVE THE NHS

Nurse apologises to patients for strike



■ Boss - Nick Hulme says staff are valued



■ Picket - long-serving Colchester Hospital nurse Anna Swan

NURSES have apologised to patients whose appointments had to be postponed as a result of strikes but stressed action was essential in order to save the NHS.

Non-urgent operations and appointments at Colchester Hospital have been rescheduled in response to frontline workers joining the picket line for two days.

The decision was taken by bosses at the East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Trust, the body which runs the hospital, after the Royal College of Nursing voted to strike.

Long-serving Colchester Hospital nurse Anna Swan, 64, has now ad-

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ressed the rescheduling of appointments, saying nurses were left with no choice but to strike.

She said: “I really feel for everyone who has had an appointment postponed why would I not? I am a nurse because I care about people.

“But this is about the health service of now, the health service of tomorrow, and the health service to come, when we are all going to need it even more than ever.

“I am really sorry appointments have been postponed but we need to

preserve the health service and unfortunately this has turned out to be the way to try and do it.

“The support of the public means everything, they need us as much as we need them.”

When asked how many and what types of operations and appointments had been postponed due to nurses downing tools, the trust said it was not able to elaborate.

Chief executive Nick Hulme, however, has reiterated the importance of patient safety throughout the strike action, during which life-saving provisions will remain in place.

The health care boss said: “We

have planned for all eventualities to keep our patients safe this our top priority.

“We value all our staff and understand the importance of good pay and conditions for individuals and their families, as well as for wider NHS staff retention and recruitment.

“While pay is a matter for Government and trade unions, we want to see a resolution as soon as possible.

“We want to make sure we can continue to focus on delivering high quality and compassionate patient care to anyone in our communities who needs it.”

MP backs laws aimed at minimising strikes

NEW laws which would give bosses the power to dismiss employees if minimum levels of service aren’t met during industrial action have been backed by Priti Patel.

The former Home Secretary, who has been the Conservative MP for Witham since 2010, gave her backing to the minimum service levels legislation in the House

of Commons arguing the new laws would limit the impact and disruption caused by strikes.

The plans, which were devised by the Truss government last year, are designed to allow emergency services to continue running at a reduced level during periods of industrial action.

Health, education, and nuclear






waste services are also covered by the potential new laws, which were discussed by Ms Patel during the debate on the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill.

She said: “The current wave of strikes and industrial action is causing disruption and has highlighted the need for the law to be reformed to protect the public.

“Businesses and people going about their day-to-day lives should be able to expect and rely on a minimum level of service and these new laws are essential to support patients, pupils and commuters.”

The legislation has been criticised by Labour, who say it could risk stripping staff of their freedom to strike.

WEATHER

| TODAY | TOMORROW | SATURDAY | SUNDAY | MONDAY |
|---|--|--|---|---|
|  Bright but chilly with light cloud -2-3C |  Another bright and cold day -2-3C |  -1-6C |  1-4C |  2-6C |

TIDES

HARWICH: Today: 9.36pm 3.5m
Tomorrow: 10.03am 3.7m, 10.36pm 3.7m
SOUTHEND: Today: 10.27pm 5.1m
Tomorrow: 10.52am 5.4m, 11.28pm 5.4m

SUNRISE/SET

TODAY: 4.23pm
TOMORROW: 7.51am, 4.24pm