



Homerton Hospital
c/o Staffside Office, Education Centre
Homerton Hospital
Homerton Row
London
E9 6SR

8th June

Councillor Ben Hayhurst
c/o Member Services
Town Hall
Mare Street
London
E8 1EA

Dear Ben

RE: Homerton Hospital award of 5-year extension to ISS for soft facilities services

We are writing from Homerton UNISON branch to raise our concerns about the news that Homerton Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has announced its intention to sign a further 5-year contract with facilities services company ISS. The Trust has issued a Voluntary Ex-Ante Transparency (VEAT) Notice to directly award the contract without a tendering process. We have been told that the contract will be signed on 30th June 2020.

As you are aware ISS have been running catering, cleaning, security and portering services at Homerton Hospital since 1st October 2015.

Homerton UNISON along with the GMB have made representations to the Trust on many occasions and in a number of ways with regard to the pay and conditions of this group of workers and with a request that the Trust enter a formal review of bringing the services back in-house.

However, there has been no formal consultation to date with the UNISON branch at the Hospital, with the UNISON representatives of ISS or the staff who work for this company. Both the UNISON branch at the Hospital and the GMB union were shocked at the news. At no stage were we, as recognised unions, given any indication that a 5-year extension was possible. In short there has not been consultation on this very significant decision.

We are also concerned that the extension of outsourced contracts for such a lengthy period without a competitive tendering process is a worrying sign in the context of the Covid-19 crisis, and the Commission should be concerned that the pandemic should not provide a cloak for continued or even accelerating privatisation within the NHS.

We are therefore asking you in your capacity as Chair of the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission to intervene with the limited authority at your disposal to urge the Trust to pause this process to allow a genuine consultation with all stakeholders to take place.

In the formal notification of this decision which we received on 03/06/20, Homerton Chief Executive Tracey Fletcher notes that *“during the pandemic the entire team of porters, security guards, cleaners and catering staff have stood alongside the teams at Homerton to ensure all our patients have continued to receive care of the highest quality during this pandemic”*. She states that she is *“grateful to each and every one of them”*.

These workers have been critical to providing services during the pandemic. Further, they are critical to providing safe patient care at all times in the NHS, which is why our demand is for them to be treated equally with other directly employed NHS workers and so to receive the same terms and conditions.

It should be noted that the decision to renew the contract will have a disproportionate and detrimental impact on a predominantly minority ethnic workforce who will be subjected to worse pay, terms and conditions than their NHS colleagues for a further 5-years at least.

We are grateful to the Commission for having raised their concerns about the terms and conditions of the workers under this contract at its meeting in February. While there was discussion at that meeting about a one or two-year extension (Tracey Fletcher stating that in her opinion there was not sufficient time to look at an in-house option by this date), there was no indication that the Trust Board were considering a 5-year extension.

In addition to the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission writing to the Trust to ask them to pause the process to allow consultation to take place, we would be grateful if the matter could be put on any other business at the meeting on Tuesday 9 June. We appreciate that this meeting will be mostly taken up by the important panel discussion on Test, Trace and Isolate in Hackney. However, if there is time at the end, we would be grateful if it could be discussed.

We hope that you are able to assist us in this. If we can provide any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on lorna.solomon@nhs.net.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Solomon
Homerton UNISON

CC:

Councillor Peter Snell
Councillor Deniz Oguzkanli
Councillor Emma Plouviez
Councillor Patrick Spence
Councillor Kofo David
Jarlath O'Connell.(Support Officer)