

Reinstate Karen Reissmann

Stop union victimisation

We have a right to fight NHS cuts

We have a right to speak out

On Monday Karen Reissmann, a leading UNISON activist and a psychiatric nurse with more than 25 years experience, was sacked for the “crime” of speaking out against cuts and privatisation.

Health workers in Manchester are refusing to allow their bosses to victimise Karen. More than 700 workers have taken 14 strike days already—a huge commitment from union members at the trust. Now a large number are to continue their strike action from Thursday until she is reinstated.

Manchester mental health and social care trust admit that Karen is not being penalised for any clinical reason. In fact, on the day she was suspended Karen received a letter confirming a promotion. Their action is entirely due to her trade union activities.

They say that she brought the trust into disrepute by speaking out against cuts and marketisation. However workers are adamant that it is management changes that have put patients’ lives in danger and that



Karen was speaking for all of them.

During the course of the strike trust bosses moved seriously ill psychiatric patients hundreds of miles to private hospitals as far away as Darlington.

The distress caused to patients and their families has caused outrage among local press and politicians.

The mental health trust—which is ranked as one of the worst in Britain, and is currently £3 million in debt—has also come in for criticism from relatives of William

Scott who claim that he committed suicide after losing his support worker.

William lived in the north Manchester area, where community mental health teams had their psychiatric nursing staff slashed from 16 to just four, and support workers cut from seven to four. William’s regular support worker had been moved on as a result of disputed reorganisation.

There must be a howl of anger from the entire trade union movement. If a trade unionist can be sacked for speaking out against cuts, then no lay activist is safe from victimisation. UNISON should use all means at its disposal to back Karen, including urging MPs and councillors to raise the issue with health secretary Alan Johnson.

Everyone who believes in a publicly-funded and publicly-run NHS should get behind this fight

What you can do

- 1) Raise the issue at your next branch meeting, and invite strikers to come and speak by ringing 07972 120 451.
- 2) Send a donation to the strike fund, payable to “Manchester Community and Mental Health UNISON”, to the union office, Manchester Community and Mental Health Union, Chorlton House, 70 Manchester Road, Manchester M21 9UN