Our avalanche helped to expose health secretary’s unlawful act

Thirty-eight degrees is the angle at which an avalanche occurs. We at 38 Degrees are part of an avalanche of change, campaigning for a more progressive, fairer and better society.

We would like to thank all the 38 Degrees members who helped raise the £20,000 to launch a legal challenge against health secretary Jeremy Hunt’s plans to close maternity and A&E services at Lewisham Hospital in London.

A judge has ruled that Mr Hunt acted unlawfully, over-reaching his powers as secretary of state. Mr Justice Silber declared that Mr Hunt had no power to make cuts at a hospital that was not part of a failing trust.

Mr Hunt’s plans, which are now ‘quashed’, were for Lewisham Hospital to lose major services, forcing patients to use a nearby failing hospital and thereby attract more funding.

It is not often that ordinary people come together to take the government to court. That was an impressive achievement in itself. But to win – and to secure a legal judgement that the health secretary is breaking the law – is simply amazing.

We would like to thank all the campaigners and the wonderful NHS staff who have just kept doing their best, despite their hospital being under threat.

David Babbs, Susannah Compton, Ian Palmer, Travis Kelly and Blanche Jones, www.38degrees.org.uk

LEWISHAM RULING IS A GREAT TRiumph FOR THE COMMunity

Yesterday’s high court ruling against plans to cut A&E and maternity services at Lewisham Hospital was an absolute triumph for local people.

Speaking as the local MP, raising the money to go to the courts was a brave thing to do and demonstrates the enormous faith that patients, hospital staff, and even the commissioning authority set up by the government, had in our arguments. We will be steadfast if the government decides to appeal this case. We hope that communities across London and throughout the UK are emboldened to stand up against threats to local services.

Dame Joan Ruddock, MP for Lewisham Deptford

ICN WITHDRAWAL DOES NOT MEAN AN END TO THE RCN’S GLOBAL WORK

The RCN has decided to leave the International Council of Nurses because it is not prepared to pay £500,000 in membership fees (News July 31).

Given this staggering sum, it comes as no surprise that the RCN’s governing council has decided to withdraw from membership.

The vote by 91.7 per cent of RCN members at a special session at congress in April to give council the authority to withdraw confirmed a strength of feeling about the expenditure.

That said, I cannot see how the voice of the RCN will be in any way diminished if at least some of this funding is utilised to support international and collegiate activities globally.

With such expenditure, the RCN could become a more proactive voice for 21st-century nursing worldwide.

I would like the RCN to look at direct and focused global activities that enhance our contribution to nursing.

We certainly have the talent within the RCN membership, so let’s make full use of it.

Kevin Davies, by email

HOW COULD WE HONOUR THE MEMORY OF NURSE JACINTHA?

Thank you for publishing Shaibya Dalal’s letter (July 31) on her joy at the safe delivery of a new royal prince and sadness as she remembers nurse Jacinta Saldanha.

Two radio presenters in Australia, pretending to be members of the royal family, telephoned the hospital where the Duchess of Cambridge was being treated last December for acute morning sickness.

Jacinta took the call and fell for the cruel hoax. She was found dead...