

Press release on behalf of *Keep Our NHS Public* and *Health Campaigns Together* for IMMEDIATE use

Biggest ever campaign is launched in defence of the NHS: over 40 organisations demand emergency funding

Over 40 organisations [1] including the NEU, NUJ and the Doctors Association UK have joined prominent NHS campaigning organisations *Keep Our NHS Public* [2] and *Health Campaigns Together* [3] to form a brand new initiative. *SOS NHS* [4] is the largest coalition yet formed in defence of the NHS comprised of campaign groups, trade unions, health and care staff, social movements and civil society organisations which are demanding an emergency funding boost of £20bn [5] for the NHS. The coalition believe this money is needed to provide funds for urgent staff needs, tackle soaring costs for backlog maintenance and reopen almost 5,000 NHS beds that have not been used since the pandemic began.

***SOS NHS* will also be holding a Day of Action on February 26th [6]** [more to follow] with events happening across the British Isles to help raise awareness of the major problems the health service now faces, and to add pressure on the government to meet its campaign demands.

These demands are:

- 1. Approve emergency funding of £20 billion to save lives this winter**
- 2. Invest in a fully publicly owned NHS and guarantee free healthcare for future generations**
- 3. Pay staff properly: without fair pay, staffing shortages will cost lives**

To stop the continued worsening of the crisis in the NHS, the coalition aims to persuade the Government to take immediate, concrete steps to relieve the crisis in hospitals, mental health, primary, community and social care, make a major U-turn and revise the Spending Review. Beyond this spring, *SOS NHS* is seeking legislation and change at the top to re-establish a fully publicly funded and provided national health service, protected from private profit-making companies. The group want to make the NHS the default provider for health service provision.

Co-Chair of *Keep Our NHS Public*, Dr Tony O'Sullivan said:

"This is a national emergency. Government could invest properly in health but over the last decade and more, we've seen it doesn't have the political will to do so. Instead it turns to private sector providers who have failed the NHS time and again, wasting tens of billions during the pandemic. We need change now. This will be the hardest winter ever in health and social care for a generation. We must act now to avoid a mental health crisis among health and care staff and safeguard services for patients and service users."

Editor of *Health Campaigns Together*, Dr John Lister said:

"To ensure no more billions are wasted on private contracts, such as we saw during the pandemic, the government must invest much more in our NHS – restore and expand NHS capacity; repair or rebuild crumbling hospitals; and reopen unused NHS beds. Repeating the mantra that the government has introduced the “health and care levy” – releasing a dribble of extra funding from April onwards – does nothing to restore morale or tackle current pressures and problems. It’s vital to increase investment, with new targets for recruitment, training, and levels of pay that would prevent the service losing staff. We also need to build a properly resourced, publicly run national care and support service, and invest in public health and policies to tackle huge and growing inequalities in health. This Government has shown it won’t change course without pressure from below: but U-turns have occurred. It’s up to us to pile on that pressure."

Writer, comedian, patron of Keep Our NHS Public, and former doctor Adam Kay said:

"I can't put it better than the six letters of this campaign: SOS NHS. The NHS is at a crucial moment. It needs our help and it needs it now."

[ends]

Spokespeople are available for interview. Contact Samantha Wathen, Press Officer for Keep Our NHS Public press@keepournhspublic.com or Call/WhatsApp: 0777 6047472

Notes to editors

1. Link to the organisations involved: <https://sosnhs.org/>
2. Keep Our NHS Public is a national independent organisation campaigning for a well-funded, publicly owned and provided NHS and a National Care, Support and Independent Living Service www.keepournhspublic.com
3. Health Campaigns Together is an affiliate organisation established in defence of the NHS <https://www.healthcampaignstogether.com/index.php>
4. SOS NHS: <https://sosnhs.org/>
5. **Why £20bn?**: The bill for backlog maintenance to repair crumbling buildings and replace obsolete equipment has soared to £9.2 billion – double the £4.5bn capital allocation to NHS England. The lack of maintenance causes thousands of incidents each year that interfere with clinical care and put patients at risk. To tackle the most urgent of these issues will cost around **£5bn**: in addition, **up to £6bn** needs to be made available to rebuild a dozen or so hospitals built in the 1970s using reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete planks, which are in danger of collapse. An additional **£3bn** is needed to reorganise, rebuild and in some cases refurbish hospital buildings to enable them to **reopen almost 5,000 beds** that were closed in 2020 to allow for social distancing and infection control, and remain unused today. **£3bn capital** and **£5bn over 3 years** in additional recovery revenue funding to equip **mental health** services to cope with the increased demands since the pandemic and expand services for adults and children, as called for by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. More investment is also urgently needed at local level to reverse recent years of cuts and rebuild public health

services that have been cut back and are now straining to support the fight against Covid.

6. SOS NHS National Day of Action: <https://www.facebook.com/events/s/sos-nhs-national-day-of-action/472075464510663/>