

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

**Over 70 NHS protests demanding extra funding to take place across Britain this
Saturday (26th February)**

On Saturday February 26th, NHS staff and campaigners from over 40 different organisations which form the new alliance *SOS NHS* [1] will hold a 'Day of Action'. [2] Campaigners, including those from *Keep Our NHS Public*, [3] *Health Campaigns Together* [4] and *NHS Workers Say No* [5] will join with frontline NHS staff at over 70 separate protests [2] across England and Scotland, to demand an immediate funding injection of £20bn to 'save lives this winter'. The alliance is also seeking fair pay for all NHS staff and the eradication of private companies from the health service. **Protests will include NHS staff in uniform, as well as a mass mobilisation of members of the public.**

Ahead of the spring budget, *SOS NHS* has also launched a petition [6] started by frontline nurse and member of the group *NHS Workers Say No*, Holly Johnston asking Chancellor Rishi Sunak to commit the additional funding required.

SOS NHS 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. 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. 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.

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

"We are shouting out loud and clear from every corner of the country to Government: fund our NHS properly. You are failing our hospitals, GP and mental health services - failing 6 million patients on waiting lists. Stop ploughing £billions into private hospitals and build up our public services instead. Pay our NHS staff what they deserve and show respect for their skill and dedication. And scrap that damaging Health and Care Bill that breaks up the NHS and allows private parasites to live off NHS waiting lists."

Mike Forster, Chair of Health Campaigns Together, says:

"Health Campaigns Together has been an active and important part of the SOSNHS alliance since it was launched last year. The crisis in the NHS is more acute than the height of the pandemic. Staff vacancies are through the roof and waiting lists have never been higher. Emergency funding is urgently required to begin putting right the damage of austerity-driven policies over the last decade. NHS staff deserve a decent pay rise and the drift towards privatisation must be halted. We have built a formidable alliance of over 40 groups, unions and professional associations. Our voices must be heard. We are fighting for the future of the NHS. Please join your local protests this Saturday."

Holly Johnston, NHS nurse and member of NHS Workers Say No, says:

"As frontline workers we have seen the devastating impact of an underfunded and understaffed service on patient safety throughout the pandemic and before it. NHS staff are not valued by this government and we have seen deliberate erosion of our pay for over 10 years, resulting in real terms pay cuts year after year. NHS staff and patients deserve more and we need to see investment in the NHS to safeguard its future and for it to be a fully publicly owned service for our society. The health of the nation is suffering and austerity has meant that health inequality has worsened. We need to address funding, privatisation and pay to invest in the long term future of the NHS. NHS staff can see the damage being done to the NHS and that is why we have joined the SOS NHS campaign and are hosting and joining in on the day of action this Saturday the 26th, to fight for our patients, our NHS and ourselves."

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

Notes to editors

1. The 40 different organisations taking part: <https://sosnhs.org/>
2. For more information on the Day of Action including links to local events, see: <https://sosnhs.org/events/>
3. Keep Our NHS Public is a national independent organisation campaigning for a well-funded, publicly owned and provided NHS www.keepournhspublic.com
4. HCT is an umbrella organisation of health campaigning groups and unions in defence of the NHS <https://healthcampaignstogether.com/>
5. NHS Workers Say No is a grassroots self-organised collective of frontline workers campaigning for pay justice for all NHS staff <https://www.facebook.com/NHSworkersSayNo>
6. Petition on Change.org: 'Rishi Sunak: We demand emergency funding for the NHS now! #SOSNHS' <https://www.change.org/p/sosnhs-emergency-funding-now>

