

# 4. Government has failed the NHS

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Underfunding, understaffing and long delay of any serious workforce plan have resulted in the biggest crisis in NHS history. Waiting lists are close to 8 million (6.4m patients awaiting 7.6m treatments). Thousands have died avoidably, either waiting for care, in the back of ambulances, or in understaffed hospitals, despite the best efforts of an overworked and underpaid workforce. In addition, **the austerity policies that have damaged the NHS are also implicated in 335,000 excess deaths** in England, Scotland, and Wales over 2012-2019 from the wider impact of local government cuts, homelessness and poverty. This cannot go on.

## WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

- Due to pressure on GP services, patients are not getting timely investigation and treatment, leading to delays in diagnosis including cancer
- The Association of Ambulance Chief Executives reported that through ambulance delays **160,000 people came to harm in one year**, over 500 with urgent conditions died before an ambulance arrived and others died in ambulances
- **According to the Royal College of Emergency Medicine at least 500 excess deaths occur each week** because of full wards preventing timely transfer from A&E
- 30,000 patients have died waiting for heart treatment in 2½ years since the pandemic onset
- Hundreds of people have needlessly gone blind because of delayed treatment – nearly 10% of those on waiting lists are for eye appointments
- The Government claim there are 'more' staff than ever: but there are over 121,000 vacancies and nowhere near 'enough' for safe staffing
- **NHS providers are very clear that the main cause of long waiting lists is understaffing** (contributed to by poor pay for health workers)
- Meanwhile the private sector relies on staff trained by the NHS; the cost of this training has been estimated to represent a public subsidy to the independent sector of £8.5 billion

## WHAT MUST HAPPEN NOW?

- An urgent funding injection to provide fair pay, safe staffing and improved working conditions
- This will boost retention and support staff health and mental wellbeing (as called for by WHO)
- Restore NHS training bursaries for nurses and allied professions
- A fully funded long-term workforce plan that guarantees safe staffing levels across all staff groups, protecting patient care