

Press Release on behalf of Keep Our NHS Public - for IMMEDIATE use

Response to Labour's manifesto pledges on the NHS

Campaigning organisation *Keep Our NHS Public* [1] respond to Labour's manifesto pledges on the NHS, set out by party leader Keir Starmer yesterday in Manchester.

Dr John Puntis, Co-Chair of Keep Our NHS Public and retired Consultant Paediatrician, said:

"The manifesto is light both on detail and any indication that it might be evidence based. The somewhat misleading commitment that 'the NHS is not for sale' (the NHS is being undermined by contracting NHS services out to private healthcare companies, not by selling the NHS off) has been dropped. But more importantly, there is no commitment to rely on publicly provided NHS services – 'With Labour [the NHS] will always be publicly owned and publicly funded'. But its parallel commitment to use 'the spare capacity in the independent sector' means funding will pay for yet more NHS staff doing more sessional work in private theatres and clinics instead of NHS work, much needed money diverted to shareholders, and further undermining of the NHS and its ability to build back its capacity. The reality is that there is no spare capacity in the private sector that does not take away NHS funding and staffing."

"40,000 more appointments a week as a key strategy for decreasing waiting lists is a drop in the ocean, representing less than a 2% increase in activity, and precariously dependent on the willingness of overworked staff to do more overtime, with no commitment to restoring fair pay. The promise to implement the New Hospitals Programme is welcome, but to be persuasive requires a categorical commitment that sufficient funding will be made available, together with a wider programme of capital investment. Neighbourhood Health Centres sound positive but in the absence of any details the potential benefit is impossible to judge. No mention is made of Medical Associate Professionals in the workforce plan representing a potential patient safety concern and being used instead of trained GPs (many of whom are now finding it difficult to get work). Little is said about addressing the emergency care pathway, and the

linked and crucial need to extensively transform social care. The crisis in maternity care is not referenced while the main thrust of 'reform' as an alternative to investment is based upon a combination of new technology, prevention, and shift of care into the community. Without funding, this is both unconvincing and far from novel."

"The NHS needs a sea-change in policy from a new political leadership. It requires a government committed to support a public and well-funded NHS, and move to establish a publicly funded national care, support and independent living service. This demands a fundamental change in perspective – one that regards funding of public services as an investment in human well-being and an underpinning of a productive economy. Good public services maximise the ability of people to participate in society and a productive economy – they are not simply a cost to be grudgingly accepted. While Labour concludes that its reforms will be in line with the NHS founding principles, the complete lack of reference to a publicly provided service means it is far from evident that this will be the case. Much more ambition is needed, harking back to the boldness of the party in 1945 when faced with rebuilding a war-ravaged society. A good starting point would be to declare a national health and care emergency".

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

Notes to editors

1. Keep Our NHS Public is an independent organisation campaigning for a properly funded and fully publicly owned NHS: www.keepournhspublic.com

