

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

This General Election we call on all parties to prioritise a restoration of 'The People's NHS'

Campaigning organisation *Keep Our NHS Public* will be using this election period to demand from the incoming government, a return to the original founding principles of the NHS: -

1. A publicly provided NHS with an end to private involvement
2. An NHS funded to succeed in line with need – not defunded to fail
3. Respect, recognition and decent pay and conditions for all health workers
4. Re-investment in public health and tackling health inequalities
5. A rebuilt, restored and expanded NHS

The NHS and social care has faced significant harm over the last 14 years. Injustices and heightened health inequalities have impacted on the majority of working people, disabled people, black and brown communities and groups vulnerable to exploitation, including undocumented people. The NHS has been underfunded compared to need by a government sympathetic to the role of the private sector in healthcare. The waiting list is at the highest level in its history (at 7.5m). Included amongst it are the worst ever waiting times for cancer treatments whilst nearly 40,000 people have suffered premature death due to the wait for heart conditions in 2022 alone [1].

In hospitals, thousands remain stuck waiting to go home due to the collapse of social care and more people present in A&E as their conditions have deteriorated due to the lack of community appointments available; general practice is on its knees and NHS dentistry is extremely hard to access. Over 250 people are dying avoidably every single week [2] in emergency departments or at home waiting for ambulances that take hours to arrive due to delays in accessing treatment in a system with 120,000 staff vacancies. In maternity units, mothers and babies are tragically dying avoidably because of understaffing and underfunding of services.

NHS staffing is in crisis with wages and working conditions having been driven down over the last decade, resulting in a retention and recruitment crisis and an epidemic of mental ill health amongst the workforce. This has significant impacts too on patient safety, as does also, the drive to replace doctors and nurses with far less qualified Physicians Associates and Nursing Assistants.

Dr Tony O'Sullivan, Co-Chair of Keep Our NHS Public and retired Consultant Paediatrician, said:

"The NHS needs a sea-change in policy from a new political leadership in government. Keep Our NHS Public will be highlighting the record of those in government and asking voters to select those who will best support a public and well-funded NHS, and move to establish a publicly funded national care, support and independent living service. This requires a fundamental change in perspective – one that regards the 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."

"The new government must change key policies on the NHS. Our call to end private involvement in NHS-delivered health care is not just a question of principle: privatisation means fragmentation and undermining of safe NHS provision. The NHS needs stability and urgent funding, not reform and further reorganisation. NHS staff and services need security to do their job and to treat patients safely and well. Primary and community care, hospitals and public health desperately need urgent support."

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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. https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/may/19/heart-patients-wait-year-treatment-england-disease-waiting-lists?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-68707883>