

# "Austerity is a Public Health Crisis, Not an Economic Necessity"

Keep Our NHS Public's response to the Chancellor's Spring Statement (26th March 2025)

Dr John Puntis, Co-Chair of the campaign group Keep Our NHS Public [1] and retired consultant paediatrician said:

*"Cutting benefits and plunging many more with chronic illness into poverty while increasing defence spending will not, as the chancellor claims, 'secure Britain's future'. To do this, we need an economy that works to make lives better. Cutting benefits will not solve the financial problem, but only transfer it elsewhere. Due to the effects of the last round of austerity, the NHS has long been not just a health service, but a welfare and social service too. All these cuts will do is increase the amount of people presenting with the effects of poverty and ill health, putting further strain on an underfunded system. Abandoning ambition through embracing the straight jacket of arbitrary and self-imposed fiscal rules has no place in building a better society.*

*It is right that those with 'the broadest shoulders should bear the heavier burden', so why not also impose a wealth tax on the super-rich? With a government that is deliberately intent on not taxing the wealthy, there can be no doubt we are now embarking on a further period of austerity. We know that this will have a devastating effect on health and worsen health inequalities. Rising mid-life mortality rates mirror those in the US, termed 'deaths of despair' – deaths from drug and alcohol related diseases and suicides – linked to societal breakdown, economic precariousness and weakening of public services. Austerity should be seen for what it is – a public health crisis and not an economic necessity. Labour now shows every sign of wanting to continue policies that will further damage health, weaken the economy and undermine society by increasing inequality."*

## **[ends]**

Spokespeople are available for broadcast interview. Contact Samantha Wathen, Press Officer for Keep Our NHS Public [press@keepournhspublic.com](mailto: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](http://www.keepournhspublic.com)