

Press Release on behalf of Health Campaigning Orgs Keep Our NHS Public, Just Treatment, Every Doctor, The Socialist Health Association, Doctors for the NHS and We Own It -- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health Groups Condemn Autumn Budget as NHS Crisis Deepens - A Collective Statement

Keep Our NHS Public [1], in partnership with Just Treatment [2] Every Doctor [3], The Socialist Health Association [4] We Own It [5] and Doctors For The NHS [6] warns that even more resources are funnelled away to corporations profiting from the ongoing crisis NHS crisis.

This autumn budget is a massive disappointment to all those who desperately wanted Labour to demonstrate that it is prepared to stand up for ordinary people and is committed to improving the lives of many struggling with the rising cost of living and deteriorating public services. This can only be done with serious policies that address the huge inequalities in wealth that lie at the heart of these issues. The abolition of the two-child benefit cap is a welcome if small move in the right direction, but much more is needed in the way of wealth redistribution.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves promised this government “will be known ... as the one that took the NHS ... got it back on its feet again and made it fit for the bright future ahead of it.” Instead, the budget fails to provide the investment needed to save patients' lives, tackle the workforce crisis (with properly trained, skilled staff) and safeguard the future of our public health service. The priority would appear to be that even more resources are funnelled away to corporations profiting from the ongoing crisis in our NHS.

The last spending review committed to a below historical average annual funding increase of 2.8% - nowhere near the increase provided by New Labour that brought about major improvements in both performance and public satisfaction. In fact, given inflation, cost increases and pay rises, it is probably only enough to maintain routine activity. It also seems likely that a further £2.5bn slice will be taken by the increase in annual drug price being driven by the Trump administration. Rather than a large cash

injection to start addressing the pressing issues, the NHS is only to benefit from reinvestment of hypothetical efficiency savings, such as from sacking 18,000 “back-office staff” - without any risk or impact assessment.

Over the past 18 months, a modest rise in appointments has hardly dented the massive waiting list numbers. The reduction by 200,000 could well be due to the validation exercise that removed names from the list rather than more patients actually being treated. Added to this, the NHS is now mired in organisational chaos (abolition of NHS England, restructuring of Integrated Care Boards, major redundancies, etc) while the crisis in acute care seems to be off ministers' radar.

Waits for admission of twelve hours or more in emergency departments are already estimated by the [Royal College of Emergency Medicine](#) to account of some 16,600 avoidable deaths each year. According to Age UK, [nearly 150,000 patients](#) aged 90 and above wait 12 hours in England's A&Es each year. Older people have been left in their own excrement and wet beds for hours and forced to watch and hear other patients die next to them.

The answer to all this is not throwing money at private sector ‘partners’ or bringing back totally discredited private finance deals (now agreed for 250 Neighbourhood Health Centres). While making it look as if the Treasury is spending less, this is no more than a fiscal illusion and always more expensive than government borrowing; it is extraordinary that this zombie policy has once again been disinterred.

Without fully addressing staff shortages and inadequate capital funding, NHS productivity will not increase. Projected delivery date of the New Hospital Programme remains 2046, trusts are struggling with a maintenance backlog that has mushroomed to almost £16bn, and 25% of primary care estate predates the NHS when more care is being shifted from hospitals. Insufficient capital investment will force even devolved administrations down a wasteful public private partnership route.

Without good health services the economy will fail to grow. To be serious about rebuilding the NHS, government needs to fund it to succeed, put an end to private outsourcing and finance deals, reverse the increasing fragmentation of services and resuscitate social care by building a National Care, Support and Independent Living Service.

The failure to increase funding in line with need, tackle the social determinants of ill-health and provide the necessary investment to ensure effective prevention through public health measures means that this budget represents another lost opportunity to repair the damage done by years of austerity. The price paid by Labour for the consequent unnecessary suffering and death will undoubtedly be made clear at the ballot box. However, government still has the opportunity to change course, to rebalance the economy, create a fairer taxation system and rebuild an NHS based on its founding principles before its time in office runs out.

Dr John Puntis - co-chair Keep Our NHS Public, said:

"Contrary to claims of having learned the lessons of the past, the government has now resurrected the zombie policy of leveraging private finance to build NHS capacity with the added risks and costs that led to cross party abandonment of this approach only a few years ago. The lessons that should have been learned from New Labour was not that PFI worked (it didn't), but that funding the NHS to meet need improved services and satisfaction while investment in public health and tackling the social determinants of ill-health were also crucially important."

Gayle Pledger, mother of a child with cystic fibrosis who works for patient-led campaign group Just Treatment, said:

"With the NHS under unbearable pressure, in this budget the government has instead prioritised inflating corporate profits. I spent years fighting a multibillion-dollar American drug company in order to win access to a lifesaving medicine for my child. They held

her life to ransom in order to extract the highest possible price from the NHS. Now the entire industry, with Donald Trump's help, has held the whole of the NHS to ransom to further boost their excessive profits. The government has caved in and thousands of NHS patients will pay for this with their lives."

Mark Ladbrooke of the Socialist Health Association, said:

"Our members in Scotland and Wales report every effort to modify and polish the Private Finance Initiative has failed. This new model of PFI will fail too at ruinous expense. Its introduction betrays patients and staff. (The Socialist Health Association has been affiliated to Labour since 1931)."

Dr Julia Patterson, CEO of Every Doctor, said:

"It is frankly unbelievable that Keir Starmer and his team are returning to these disastrous policies for the NHS and public finances. They do not benefit anyone other than private company shareholders, and must be resisted. The last thing we need is yet more NHS privatisation, particularly from a Labour government who promised to rebuild the NHS."

Sophie Conquest - Lead Campaigner at public ownership campaigning organisation We Own It said:

"The decision to bring back private finance into the NHS betrays the government's manifesto promise that the NHS will always be publicly owned and publicly funded. New private finance will harm patients by diverting money away from patient care, and towards the pockets of shareholders. We've already seen the sickening cost of PFI in our NHS. Some trusts are having to choose [repaying PFI debts over buying medicine for patients](#). In the last 5 years alone - NHS trusts have spent more than £1.8 billion on PFI interest payments. This would have paid for the [starting salaries of 50,044 new doctors](#). Since 2023, Streeting has received over [£200,000 in private healthcare related](#)

donations. It must be asked whether this - an open door to NHS privatisation - is what these firms have received in return. Private finance has already been repackaged again and again, as LIFT, the Non-Profit Distributing Model and the Mutual Investment Model. Each time, taxpayers and patients pay the price while shareholders reap the profits. No matter what new label it has, this latest iteration is no different. It is simply PFI 2.0."

Dr Eric Watts – Chair, Doctors for the NHS, said:

"The NHS not only requires better funding but also more support from the government. The message should be 'Give us the tools and we will do the job' – the benefit of realistic funding was seen in 2002 to 2008 when waiting lists were at their lowest and public satisfaction was at its highest. Increasing private provision leads to fragmentation of services with loss of control and accountability. This policy is demotivating for NHS staff giving their best in trying conditions and should be reversed."

[ends]

Spokespeople are available for broadcast interview. Contact in the first instance for all spokespeople - Samantha Wathen, Press Officer for Keep Our NHS Public

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
2. Just Treatment is a patient-led health justice group campaigning for patients lives to be put before corporate profits: <https://justtreatment.org/>
3. Every Doctor is a campaigning organisation fighting for patients, staff and the future of the NHS: <https://everydoctor.org.uk/>
4. The Socialist Health Association (SHA) is a membership organization affiliated with the Labour Party that promotes socialist principles to improve health and well-being, and advocates for a publicly funded health and care service <https://sochealth.co.uk/>

5. We Own It campaigns against privatisation of essential services. They believe public services belong to all of us - from the NHS to schools, water to energy, rail to Royal Mail, care work to council services <https://weownit.org.uk/>
6. Doctors For The NHS is a campaigning organisation for the restoration of the *NHS* as a publicly funded, publicly provided and publicly accountable service <https://doctorsforthenhs.org.uk/>