

Press Statement on behalf of Keep Our NHS Public - for IMMEDIATE release

## Health Secretary's Confrontation with Doctors Is Irresponsible Amid Winter Crisis

Following Health Secretary Wes Streeting's recent comments about the forthcoming Resident Doctors strikes, Keep Our NHS Public's [1] **Co-Chair and retired Consultant Paediatrician, Dr Tony O'Sullivan, says:**

*"It is the height of irresponsible behaviour from the Health Secretary, Wes Streeting, to go to war with doctors and the BMA amidst the flu epidemic and this, the second winter crisis since the Starmer–Streeting administration took office. The Government cannot pretend that they had no warning, that they didn't see it coming. Nor should they deny that it is their responsibility to deal with it. Other European countries look at the UK in wonder at our annual 'Winter crisis'. They build in capacity to deal with the expected. Surprise, surprise, more people get sick in Winter. Successive governments have refused to meet need with funding and resources for NHS staff and have abandoned social care to the private sector.*

*Streeting says:*

*'I cannot guarantee, I honestly don't want to catastrophise or sensationalise, I cannot sit here and look you in the eye and tell you that no patient will come to harm.'* [LBC with Nick Ferrari, 12th December]

*Yet he knows from preceding years and three major national reports [2,3,4] that 16,600 avoidable deaths of patients in the last year were caused by delays in urgent and emergency care because of underfunding and neglect of the NHS, and exacerbated by underfunding and neglect of social care, now largely in the hands of private corporations. To attempt to put the blame on exhausted, overworked and underpaid doctors is unacceptable. It is Streeting's responsibility to maintain, retain and support our healthcare workers. These are the same healthcare workers we clapped during Covid and who gave up so much to keep us all safe then. We are losing thousands of doctors and nurses from the NHS and tens of thousands of doctors are unemployed or unable to find training posts – through no fault of their own.*

*Streeting's cynical claim that doctors have received a wage boost of a cumulative 28.9% over three years is negated by the reality that the cumulative inflation of 25–30% over the three years 2022/3–2024/5 means minimal level of pay restoration was achieved. No healthcare worker wants to strike, but they are forced to do so, because after nearly 18 months in office the Labour Government has failed to meet their needs – and the needs of the NHS and the patients it serves.*

*The Government must take action to give NHS resident doctors, and other staff, the remuneration they deserve. But instead, as with the scapegoating of migrants and asylum*

*seekers as the cause of multiple ills, the Government's self-serving reaction is to scapegoat doctors and their union, the BMA, for the NHS crisis Labour was voted into office to solve. Wes Streeting must pay doctors properly, fully fund the NHS, urgently address social care and take responsibility for the failings of his and previous administrations."*

**[Ends]**

#### **Notes to editors**

1. Keep Our NHS Public is a national independent campaigning organisation established in 2005 to oppose cuts and closures of the NHS and campaign for a well-funded and fully publicly funded and delivered NHS [www.keepournhspublic.com](http://www.keepournhspublic.com)
2. Royal College of Nursing (RCN) – Patients Dying and Harmed in Corridors (January 2025)
3. The RCEM / All-Party Parliamentary Group Corridor Care Report — showing nearly 1 in 5 A&E patients treated in corridors and sharing public polling on confidence in emergency care. (November 2025)
4. The Patients Association – Response to HSSIB Investigation Announcement (August 2025)
  - Emphasises how corridor care distresses patients and families, strips dignity, and increases risk of harm.
  - Supports the HSSIB investigation as an opportunity to highlight and learn from patient experiences.
  - Calls for patients' voices to be central to recommendations.