

Press Release on behalf of Keep Our NHS Public - Embargoed Until Monday 24th February at 00.01

Patients Before Profit: NHS Campaigners Take to Parliament in Protest Against Starmer's Healthcare Strategy

Campaigners from Keep Our NHS Public (KONP) [1] will gather outside Parliament this Wednesday, 26th February, from 12-2 PM to oppose the government's push towards NHS privatisation. The protest, entitled 'Patients Not Profit: Keir Starmer, Invest in the NHS – Not the Private Sector'[2], will take place at George V Statue, Old Palace Yard, London (SW1P 3JY) and is open to all who believe in a publicly funded, publicly provided NHS. Press/media attendance is warmly welcomed.

KONP strongly condemns the Labour Party's reliance on imagined private sector spare capacity as a means to "fix" the NHS, and the £2.5bn for additional activity under a new partnership agreement. KONP argues that such policies are inefficient, costly, and funnel taxpayer money into corporate profits rather than patient care. The group also criticises Labour's backtracking on the New Hospital Programme, warning that failure to properly invest in NHS infrastructure will further damage an already struggling service.

A Crumbling NHS: The Cost of Underfunding

The recent report by Lord Darzi highlights a shocking £37 billion capital funding shortfall, leaving NHS hospitals underfunded compared to international counterparts. Meanwhile, the maintenance backlog - funds required to bring dilapidated hospitals up to basic safety standards - has soared to £13.8 billion in England alone. Yet, despite these urgent needs, Labour has swiftly abandoned its manifesto promise to complete the New Hospital Programme.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting touted the latest budget as "the biggest capital allocation since Labour was last in power," but KONP warns that the promised £3.1 billion over two years is nothing more than a sticking plaster on a gaping wound.

Dr. John Puntis, Co-Chair of Keep Our NHS Public and a retired Consultant Paediatrician, condemned the government's stance:

"The idea that there's 'no money left' for the NHS is a myth. When the banking crisis hit, billions were conjured up overnight. During the pandemic, the government found vast sums to respond to an emergency. Yet, when it comes to the NHS, we're told to make do with cuts and privatisation. PFI and public-private partnerships have failed spectacularly, draining money away from patient care while lining corporate pockets. The government can borrow at lower rates than the private sector, and public investment in the NHS has been proven to work—as we saw under the Blair-Brown years. Labour's return to privatisation is not 'radical' - it's an outdated, zombie policy that should have been buried long ago. KONP calls on Keir Starmer to ditch these disastrous plans and commit to the urgent public investment our NHS so desperately needs."

Keep Our NHS Public urges the public to stand up against creeping privatisation and demand that Labour honour its commitment to a properly funded, fully public NHS. Join the rally this Wednesday to send a clear message: our NHS is not for sale.

[Ends]

Spokespeople are available for broadcast interview. Contact 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. <https://keepournhspublic.com/event/month-of-action-london-konp-rally/>