

Press release on behalf of Keep Our NHS Public - FOR IMMEDIATE USE

## **Keep Our NHS Public to lead NHS bloc in major anti-austerity demo this Saturday (7th June)**

Health campaigning organisation *Keep Our NHS Public* (KONP) [1] which this year celebrates its 20th anniversary, will lead a dedicated **NHS Bloc** at a major national demonstration on **Saturday 7th of June** in central London, as part of a coordinated response to the Labour government's regressive "Austerity 2" budget.

Called and organised by **The People's Assembly Against Austerity** [2], the demonstration is likely to bring together tens of thousands in opposition to cuts targeting disabled people, older people, and public services – while military spending is set to rise. The NHS Bloc is expected to be one of the largest and most visible contingents on the day, with health workers, patients, and campaigners marching together in defence of the NHS.

The demonstration comes amid growing public concern over the future of the NHS, with widespread staff shortages and planned redundancies, significant imposed financial cutbacks and creeping privatisation placing immense pressure on services. KONP believe that Labour's current trajectory of heavily investing in the private sector, is a betrayal of the public's demand for a fully funded, publicly provided health service.

The 7th of June demonstration is backed by major trade unions including **UNISON**, **Unite**, **NEU**, **PCS**, **RMT**, and others. Organisers warn that Labour's failure to offer a bold alternative to austerity is fuelling public disillusionment, and opening the door to far-right parties like **Reform UK**, who made gains in recent local elections. KONP is calling on the public to join the NHS bloc on the march and help send a clear message: **austerity is a political choice – and we choose public services, not cuts.**

**Dr John Puntis, Co-Chair of *Keep Our NHS Public* and retired Consultant**

**Paediatrician who will be speaking at the event, says:**

*"In 1948, a war ravaged economy did not persuade politicians that creating the NHS was unaffordable. More recently, austerity has cost hundreds of thousands of lives and irreparably damaged people's health. We now need a vision for health and social care that recognises them as a positive benefit to society and not just a drain on resources. Rather than a second phase of austerity, we must have economic thinking geared to investment in public services, making lives better and redistributing wealth more fairly."*

**Holly Turner, NHS Nurse and Co-Founder of the grassroots org, *NHS Workers Say No* [3] who will be speaking at the demonstration, says:**

*"As a learning disability nurse working on the front line, I am appalled to witness the proposed welfare reforms...these attacks on the welfare state set a dangerous precedent and are a world away from the politics of the Labour party that founded the NHS. Alongside my colleagues across the NHS, we recently received news of our annual pay award. By only offering nursing staff 3.6 per cent it is clear that this government has no intention of investing in the NHS and its staff and I urged all colleagues when balloted to reject this insulting deal. This deal is yet another real-terms pay cut and goes no way towards offering the pay restoration we are owed. To all workers: reject bad deals, unite across sectors to show full solidarity, and take to the streets on June 7 to show this government that we will not accept its attacks on our pay and safety at work."*

**Logistics:** The NHS Bloc will assemble at Portland Place/Langham Street (near the BBC) at 11:30am (look for the large banner and placards/flags) and move off at noon, to march to the stage at Parliament Square arriving around 2.15-2.30pm to hear speakers. Those on the platform include former Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, and key figures in the NHS campaigning and union movement.

**[ends]**

**For media enquiries related to the NHS bloc or to arrange interviews with KONP spokespeople ahead of or on the day, including NHS staff participating in the march, contact:** Samantha Wathen - Press and Media Officer for Keep Our NHS Public [press@keepournhspublic.com](mailto:press@keepournhspublic.com) or call/WhatsApp: 0777 6047472

**General demonstration organisers (People's Assembly) contact,** including on the ground logistics: Tel: Ramona McCarthy on 07933 594080

### **Notes to Editors**

**1. Keep Our NHS Public** is an independent organisation established in 2005 to campaign for a fully publicly owned and provided NHS. [www.keepournhspublic.com](http://www.keepournhspublic.com)

**2. The People's Assembly Against Austerity** was founded in 2013 to unite trade unions, campaigns, and activists in a movement against austerity.

<https://thepeoplesassembly.org.uk>

**3. NHS Workers Say No** is a grassroots organisation of health workers campaigning against NHS privatisation, underfunding, and unsafe working conditions

<https://www.facebook.com/NHSworkersSayNo/>