

SAVE OUR NHS

FIGHT THE TORIES' HEALTH AND CARE BILL
FULLY FUND NHS AND SOCIAL CARE

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Save our NHS & Care

Social care is in crisis and needs fixing. Over 40,000 died from Covid in care homes during the pandemic in an overwhelmingly privatised system that puts profit before safety.

Average pay for care workers is a paltry £8.50 an hour. One in four are on zero-hour contracts. With that level of pay and condition it's not surprising that there's a shortage of 170,000 care workers.

And the NHS needs much more funding. The Tory health minister himself has said that NHS waiting lists could rise to 13 million! The Health Foundation charity says it would take nearly £17 billion just to deal with the current backlog. Three times the initial £5.4 billion that the Tories are promising!

Once again the Tory response is to make working-class people pay. Increasing national insurance contributions will hit working people in their pockets just as food and energy prices are going up, the Universal Credit uplift is being scrapped, and workers are facing attacks on their wages and conditions through 'fire and rehire', the end of furlough and other onslaughts from the bosses.

Meanwhile the Pandora Papers give us a glimpse of how much the rich hide away for themselves.

This isn't about young versus old. It's about a system where the rich have got richer even during the pandemic and the rest of us are struggling. There should be no place for private profiteers in our health and social care system. Everyone should have access to free universal health and social care in an integrated system based on need not profit.

Fight the Health & Care Bill

The Tories' Health and Care Bill is presented as being about integration of the NHS and social care but in reality it is a plan to accelerate privatisation of the NHS, reduce the little democratic oversight that currently exists, and lead to breaking up a national service.

It doesn't solve staffing and bed shortages, it doesn't pay decent wages, it doesn't reinstate the millions cut from social care, it doesn't take care homes out of the hands of private profiteers.

It is only through mass workers' struggle, linked to fighting for a working class political voice, that we can establish a fully funded, publicly owned and democratically controlled NHS and social care system - a socialist NHS.

NHS unions must prepare to strike together

It's in pay packets now - the Tory government's miserly 3% 'pay rise' for NHS workers. It is clearer by the day to NHS staff that this amounts to effectively nothing. At the same time, waiting lists are growing and the strain on NHS workers is immense.

Even before the effects of tax hikes and price rises really started to sink in, members in the health unions - Unison, RCN, GMB and Unite - voted overwhelmingly to reject the 3%, giving a clear indication of willingness for action.

It is essential now that the health unions get together to plan a timetable for coordinated industrial action ballots to demand a substantial pay rise.

Campaign

The TUC recently met and agreed to organise a national demonstration next Spring with a campaign of rallies around the country in the build up. Let's fight to make sure that happens, and to put fighting together for a pay rise and to defend the NHS at the heart of it.

The Tory anti-trade union laws demand a 50% turnout in an industrial action ballot. That means we have to launch almighty campaigns of workplace meetings, rallies and protests.

Leaflets need to go out and discussions take place ward by ward, canteen by canteen, desk by desk.

Whichever union we are in, we must plan in our workplaces. For example:

- Call on your union branch to reach out to the other unions in your hospital.
- If there are moves by the right-wing leaderships locally to block action, workers can come together under the banner of NHS Workers Say No.
- Call a meeting now to prepare a campaign.
- Call pay day protests at the main gate.

Like everyone else in the public sector, NHS workers know 'there's too much month at the end of the money!' But the Tories can be pushed back - look at the fuel crisis they are currently in. We can win, but to do so we have to fight and prepare to strike together.

