

11.09.2023

Labour Party Women's Conference Motion

Decriminalisation of Abortion throughout the UK

This conference deplores the imprisonment of a woman in England in June 2023, against the representations of professional medical bodies, for accessing abortion outside of legal stipulations.

Abortion in England and Wales remains a criminal offence under sections 58 and 59 of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, and in Scotland, is a criminal offence under common law.

In contrast, decriminalisation of abortion passed into law in Northern Ireland in October 2019. In England, women have been imprisoned, and doctors have had restrictions placed on their practice, due to the 1861 Act.

The 1967 Abortion Act does not decriminalise abortion; instead it permits abortion in licensed premises if two doctors agree the grounds of the Act are met.

The 1967 Act is no longer fit for purpose. It causes unnecessary delays in treatment, infringes women's autonomy and restricts nurses' and midwives' participation in care. Decriminalisation will enable best practice.

Decriminalisation does not mean lack of regulation. Abortion provision will continue to be highly regulated and subject to the GMC's professional standards, including informed consent. Civil and criminal law will apply as for all clinical care.

We respect women and trust them to make responsible decisions for themselves and their families.

This Women's Conference calls on the Labour Party to make a manifesto commitment to decriminalise abortion by repealing sections 58 and 59 of the 1861 Offences Against the Persons Act, as has already occurred in Northern Ireland.

SHA Delegate Contact:

Dr Rathi Guhadasan, rathiguha@hotmail.com

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Labour Party Conference Motion

An NHS Fit for the Future

Conference celebrates:

- 75 years of Labour's National Health Service
- the continuing provision by the Welsh government of a planned, publicly provided and funded NHS.

Conference confirms its support for the 2022 Conference NHS Composite. Central to this is the elimination of the Tories' corporate capture of NHS commissioning structures and service provision.

Conference notes the disastrous deterioration in our NHS during 13 years of Tory misrule, in particular the failure to match the spending increases of the last Labour Government and the passage of the Health and Care Act (HCA), which fragments the English NHS into 42 Integrated Care Systems modelled on US market provision. Labour will abolish the HCA.

Conference reaffirms Labour's commitment to 100% direct employment of NHS workers and the total elimination of outsourcing. This will enable trade unions to secure fair pay and conditions for their members, whose selfless work during the pandemic has saved thousands of lives.

The next Labour government will ban political donations from private healthcare corporations, their lobbyists, or those invested in private healthcare corporations. Labour and Labour MPs will not accept such donations.

Conference therefore resolves

- To repeal the Health and Care Act 2022 and to reverse all aspects of integrated care systems at the earliest opportunity.
- To fully renationalise England's universal, comprehensive, publicly provided national health service with funding levels in line with the achievements of the last Labour Government.

SHA Delegates Contacts:

Harry Stratton, hstr2100@gmail.com & Dr Rathi Guhadasan, rathiguha@hotmail.com

At the 2022 Labour conference the SHA health motion was combined with other NHS motions and the resulting composite calls on Labour to repeal the Health and Care Act 2022, eliminate integrated care systems and return all privatised parts of the NHS to public control upon forming a government.

It was backed unanimously by conference.

Composite 15 - HEALTH Conference notes:

12 years of Conservative underfunding, neglect and mismanagement have left our NHS with waiting lists at the highest on record and the lowest level of patient satisfaction since 1997

- those needing mental health support have been particularly let down
- that the imposition of US-style structures such as Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) in the Health and Care Act 2022 shows how corporate involvement in 11 policy making leads to private profits at the expense of patient care and workers' pay
- that the ICSs, rather than integrate, obstruct high quality social care alongside the NHS
- that the personal experiences of many in countries with healthcare for profit systems, most notably the USA, warn of the dangers of privatised healthcare systems
- that there is a crisis in which GPs work under extreme pressure, beyond contracted hours; numbers entering training will not sustain the workforce
- that good mental health runs through all aspects of life and can only be tackled as an embedded part of wider living standards
- a quarter of mental health beds have been cut, over a third of children were turned away from mental health services last year alone, and right now 1.6 million people are waiting for mental health treatment
- that Labour created the NHS and should be its primary defender and reject any plan to increase privatisation in the healthcare system.

Conference reaffirms:

A. Labour's unequivocal commitment to a publicly funded, publicly provided, publicly accountable, universal and comprehensive National Health Service.

B. There must be direct employment of NHS workers, ending commercialisation and fragmentation and the use of outsourcing, private providers and public private partnerships within the NHS.

C. Ending outsourcing better enables our friends and allies in the union movement to secure fair pay and conditions for their members, whose work during the pandemic saved tens of thousands of lives.

D. Health services are of better quality, more equitable and cost-effective when nationally planned and provided by democratically-accountable, public authorities with local expertise.

E. The socialist achievements of the Welsh government in publicly providing and funding a public Welsh NHS

Conference resolves Labour must:

1. adopt a position of unequivocal support for the National Health Service and a position of outright opposition and commit to vote against any and all forms of privatisation of the NHS;
2. commit to returning all privatised portions of the NHS to public control upon forming a Government;
3. not accept donations from companies interested in outsourcing NHS functions;
4. immediately launch a public campaign against privatisation of the NHS and actively support current campaigns and activist groups;
5. publicly support all NHS Trade Unions campaigning to return to and retain all public control of the NHS, including, but not limited to any legal Industrial action;
6. commit to support GPs so that everyone can access care when needed and staff are developed and valued;
7. guarantee an appointment for all citizens
8. allow medical professionals to use a variety of appointment types (e.g. virtual or in-person) based on medical need
9. provide more places for General Practice, Nurse Practitioners, and other staff roles where a shortage exists
10. build and maintain an NHS fit for the future, by providing the staff, equipment and modern technology needed to treat patients on time.
11. commit to a national well-being strategy in which mental health prevention is embedded within wider aims. The strategy would elevate the importance of mental health and link to other policy areas of our society and economy. Conference therefore resolves:
12. To repeal the Health and Care Act 2022 and to reverse and eliminate Integrated Care Systems To establish a publicly funded, publicly provided, publicly accountable, universal and comprehensive National Health Service
13. To return all privatised portions of the NHS to public control upon forming a Government;
14. To ensure a Labour government and economy are fit to handle another pandemic with proper preparations and regulations.
15. To ensure Labour invests in research that focuses on epidemiology, biomedical sciences and research in other STEM fields, bracing for all forms of a pandemic.
16. To establish comprehensively improved public health.