

## Labour's National Policy Forum 2023 – Health Section, Socialist Health Association Response

The health section of the National Policy Forum document will not deliver the NHS we want and need. It does not implement Conference policy agreed unanimously in 2022:

*“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.*

*To return all privatised portions of the NHS to public control.”*

**(Composite Motion 15)**

### **Conference also agreed:**

*“Health services are better quality, more equitable and cost-effective when nationally planned and provided by democratically-accountable public bodies with local expertise. ... A Labour government must commit to ending ‘Integrated Care Systems’, re-instate the NHS as a public service, end commercialisation and profiteering, and abandon public sector cuts.”*

**(reference back to part of NPF document 2022)**

### **In line with Conference resolutions, the policy on health should include:**

- End the use of the private sector to provide NHS services and reinvest in the NHS to take back privatised parts. Far from having ‘spare capacity’, the private sector relies massively on staff trained and employed by the NHS, and leaves the NHS to deal with private sector mistakes and complications as intensive care is not profitable enough.
- Acknowledgement that the extent of private sector control of the running of the NHS (through data and management systems, for example) and in providing clinical services has seriously undermined the NHS. Market mechanisms, including designating some providers as ‘preferred’, should have no place in the provision of health care.
- Repeal the Health and Care Act 2022 and remove the US-style structures – Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) – which it established. ICSs are not a

'bulwark against privatisation': they allow corporate involvement in policy making which leads to private profits at the expense of patient care and workers' pay. The NHS must be a democratically accountable publicly provided service once again.

- Increase funding to provide secure resources to respond to rising needs:
  - Support and pay staff properly, so they stay in the NHS and can develop in their careers.
  - Provide capital investment and revenue growth for the buildings, equipment and technology needed to treat patients – but without seeing technical innovations as a substitute for proper staffing.
- A commitment to a national well-being strategy recognising the importance of mental health and embedded within wider social and economic policy areas is welcome. But it will not succeed without making clear how more mental health professionals can be recruited and without addressing the dominance of the private sector in providing much of the care and treatment of people – especially children – with mental health problems.
- Support for GP practices so that everyone can access care when needed and staff are developed and valued, must include funding and more training places for General Practice, Nurse Practitioners, and a range of health professionals. Continuity of care requires adequate and consistent funding for primary care, IT systems which function between practices and secondary care, and good links with local authority services and community organisations.
- Commitment to address the social, economic and environmental determinants of health, ill health and inequalities must be in the forefront of policy. It must re-establish, not further erode, public provision of the welfare state - from a return to quality, mass council housing to restoring local authorities' budgets for a range of community services. Investment in local authority and NHS public health and health promotion services is essential, to prevent ill health or detect conditions like heart problems, cancer, alcohol and drug addiction, obesity early so that treatment is more effective and quality of life is improved. Outsourcing these services to not-for-profit or commercial sectors fragments a holistic approach.
- Practical suggestions are needed to support the commitment to address health inequalities, in particular for women and people from black and minority ethnic communities. Setting 'new targets' – for example to end the 'Black maternity mortality gap' – will not be enough without evidence-based and properly funded services. This is also true for mental health services.

We welcome the commitment to decriminalise abortion and to recognise it as an essential part of health care.

- Without challenging the private sector dominance of social care provision and without adequate funding, ICSs are not leading to high quality social care alongside the NHS. A publicly funded and publicly provided National Care Service would ensure care and support for independent living for all who need it.