



### 'Our Skills Don't Pay the Bills'

**Caroline Bedale, SHA Central Council, GM Branch**

Critical Care NHS workers employed by Northern Care Alliance in Oldham, Salford and Bury were on strike on 12th March 2026. They had been negotiating over NCA's attempts to cut costs by cutting the pay of staff doing overtime. NCA wanted them to sign on to NHS Professionals – which then pays less than the Agenda for Change extra hours rate – for overtime and bank work. The overtime is only needed because of staff shortages. Critical Care units across the Trust are heavily reliant on overtime and bank staff covering shifts to meet safe staffing requirements for critically ill patients. The specialist nature of the care required in critical care means most shifts are picked up by staff already working on the unit. Under NHS Professionals, staff covering these shortages suffer a significant drop in pay and NCA are able to avoid employer pension contributions. A UNISON member said "I'm a highly trained and skilled clinical professional and I literally keep people alive. NCA has reduced my pay by £10 an hour for our extra hours rates that we rely on and I'm now struggling to make ends meet".



"NHS Professionals is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Department of Health and Social Care, but operates effectively as a private company. Last year they posted pre-tax profits of a staggering £11.4M.

After over a year of trying to resolve this issue with the Trust UNISON members voted 98% in favour of strike action. The Secretary of the Joint Staff Side, Sally-Ann Griffiths, said: "Despite taking part in talks, and those talks initially seeming positive last week, unfortunately they took a turn yesterday and we were given nothing to take back to our members for their consideration." The strike that followed was for 12 hours, and was solidly supported by the members – Nurses, Nursing Associates, Clinical Support Workers, Domestic, Ward Clerks and Housekeepers – and by GM SHA and GM Keep Our NHS Public." *Messages of solidarity can be sent to: [unisonnca@nca.nhs.uk](mailto:unisonnca@nca.nhs.uk).*

### Together Alliance Demo Sat. 28 March Migrants Make Our NHS Bloc



Keep Our NHS Public, NHS Workers Say No, and other NHS campaign organisations, including the SHA, have called an NHS bloc on the Together Alliance Demo assembling on Park Lane at **12pm on Saturday 28 March**.

Migrants Make Our NHS Bloc Assembles 12pm: \\ Hilton Hotel Park Lane, Bus Stop A, London W1J 7FW  
What3words: comical.factor.pillow . Further event details, [here](#) and on the Together Alliance website, [here](#).

### "How come we didn't know about Sub-Cos" Keep Our NHS Public

**SHA Chair Dr Rathi Guhadasan**

Speaking to KONP members on the growing use of NHS-owned private companies. The term 'SubCo' refers to a particular type of a subsidiary company. "Subsidiaries are private companies that are owned or controlled by another organisation or business (the parent), but are nonetheless separate legal entities. The degree of control a parent company exercises over its subsidiary depends on the management style of the parent company's executives and on whoever owns the subsidiary's shares: the parent company may be the sole owner or one of several owners. When the parent company owns 100% of the shares, the subsidiary is referred to as either a wholly owned subsidiary (WOS), or a SubCo." (KONP, 2025).

Based on an exhibition, "How come we didn't know about SubCos? The growing use of NHS-owned private companies. A photographic exhibition" – with photographs by Marion Macalpine, research and text by Jan Savage, these talks center around the increased use of sub-cos for services within the NHS and where the NHS are vulnerable to acquisition by the private sector. 8 Min audio clip, listen in full, [here](#).

The full series of talks from other healthcare professionals and activists can be found [here](#).

## Cuba Blockade and Solidarity

London branch invites all SHA members to hear from speakers on zoom, Thurs. 26<sup>th</sup> March, 7.30PM

The President of Cuba, Miguel Canal-Díaz, is presently holding talks with representatives of the US government "on the basis of equality and respect for the political systems of both states, and for the sovereignty and self-determination of our Government, taking into account a sense of reciprocity and adherence to international law."

*"The current pressure points are oil, leading most devastatingly to power cuts, and the return of doctors working overseas, leading to a shortage of foreign currency with which to pay for imports (Politico, 2026)... The countries concerned are much in need of Cuban doctors. The US State Department is offering countries that agree to stop employing Cuban doctors, support for "infrastructure modernization," like telemedicine and virtual training, as well as help in turning to "ethical third-country recruitment" of medical workers ("ethical" undoubtedly meaning servile to US policy). Honduras and Jamaica have been among the first of the countries that have cancelled their programmes. Most countries are reluctant to turn their back on Cuba and inflict hardship on their own populations at the same time, because they have no proper alternative source of doctors to turn to." - Mark Howell, London branch, writes examining the impact of the blockade on Cuba - in healthcare and civilians.*

Unison international committee vice-chairwoman Micaela Tracey-Ramos, speaking to the 2025 TUC Congress, warned that the "strangulation of the Cuban economy by the US has meant 'devastating shortages' in healthcare (Morning Star, 2025).



The London Branch is focusing its next branch meeting at **7.30 pm on Thursday 26 March** on Cuba, [zoom here](#).  
**Speakers: Bernard Regan**, National Secretary of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, has led trade union delegations to Cuba, and is also a trustee of the National Education Union. He is the author of 'The Balfour Declaration: Empire, the Mandate and Resistance in Palestine' (2018).

**Claudia Turbet-Delof**, a Hackney councillor, feminist, community organiser and proud Bolivian-Londoner. After arriving in London, she worked as a cleaner in homes and offices across the city, witnessing first-hand the precariousness and exploitation of the expanding gig economy. She is driven by a lifelong commitment to dignity, workers' rights and collective power and has engaged in struggles in Latin America over several years. She recently returned from Cuba where she visited relatives. There will be time for Q&A. Support Cuba Solidarity, [here](#).

## National Policy Forum Consultation

**All Members Welcome**

National Policy Forum LP Consultation 2026

NPF consultation is open, we would like to allow for members the opportunity to feed in. SHA will host space on **Wed., 25th March on zoom, 7-8.30PM** to discuss. Read full PDF, [here](#). Zoom - Join [here](#). Meeting ID: 892 2092 1142 / Passcode: 879808 The consultation will run from Thursday 5 March to Thursday 11 June.

The consultation questions for the "Build An NHS Fit For The Future" are below - although we will allow time for a more wide-ranging discussion. Read SHA's contribution from the 2025, [here](#).  
**1.** How can we continue to strengthen community and primary care, such as general practice, so that care can be delivered closer to and in the home?  
**2.** How can neighbourhood health services deliver more personalised and preventive care in active partnership with patients?  
**3.** How can we most effectively utilise digital and AI-enabled tools, like the NHS App, to deliver more productive and higher-quality care in our communities?  
**4.** What might integrated neighbourhood teams look like, what care might they deliver, and where?  
**5.** How can we best support healthcare workers, and other professionals like social care workers, to operate in these neighbourhood settings?  
**6.** What are the specific implications of policy proposals in this area for (a) women, (b) Black, Asian and minority ethnic people (c) LGBT+ people, (d) disabled people and (e) all those with other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010? What are the implications of these proposals on reducing the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage?  
**7.** What consideration would need to be given to policy proposals in this area when collaborating with devolved administrations and local government in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland? - *Further dates for member participation to be circulated.*



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# Vivien Walsh – a life in the struggle for socialism and reproductive health

Jamie Green and Vivien Walsh

October 2025 – news broke of the “biggest change to sexual health since the 1960s”: people would now be able to access the ‘morning after pill’ on high street pharmacies without needing an appointment with their GP or an appointment at a sexual health clinic – an NHS expansion that spanned across almost 10,000 pharmacies. Many people, particularly those of Generation X, Millennial and younger generations, wouldn’t be able to recall a time when we didn’t have the right to free access to contraception on the NHS in the UK; Vivien Walsh does. In the time of rising anti-abortion rhetoric and funding, right-wing “trad-wife”, misogyny of the “manosphere” and its pyramid schemes (as captured by Louis Theroux on his Netflix special), it’s important to remember where these rights came from – and the ongoing struggle under neoliberal, late-stage capitalism.

*Fight for the Right to Choose – “Women in the Labour Movement have been campaigning for at least 100 years on issues of maternal health and the right to choose whether and when to have children, and to use any technological advances that might make those choices easier, or even possible. From 1924 onwards the Women’s Labour League annually and unanimously supported birth control. The men in the Labour and Trade Union Movement were not always so unanimous, or so interested in the subject. In 1924 the first Labour Government was elected, and the League bombarded John Wheatley – the first Labour Minister of Health – with demands for improved health care in childbirth and after, and for the provision of free, state birth control clinics. They organised meetings and major demonstrations. They kept reminding him that giving birth had four times the death rate of working in the mines, the most dangerous job for men, and twenty times the likelihood of permanent disability. However, it was not until 1974 – another 50 years later – that women achieved the right to free contraception on the NHS, irrespective of age or marital status...”*

Walsh, who had joined the Labour Party, was coming off the back of campaigning for these exact contraception rights in the Young Socialists and carried the fight into the Labour Women’s Organisation. It was the enactment of the NHS Reorganisation Act of 1973, brought in 1974, which introduced, for the first time, a requirement for family planning services to be formally provided on the NHS.

Only year before that, it was May McGee and her husband Shay who successfully challenged the Government of Ireland’s state ban on contraception, winning a landmark Supreme Court case...Mr McGee, who preceded May in death in 2024, remembered for his courage under cross examination when asked if he would be happy to see his wife on contraception, “**I’d prefer to see her using contraceptives than be placing flowers on her grave.**”



*Vivien, writing under her previous name (Seal) “Whose Choice? Working Class Women and the Control of Fertility” (1990)*

**We cannot go back to the “dark ages” before the NHS:** At a time when the NHS is actively being bled dry by the creeping corporate capture over the last 40 years – no less by the 2024 NHS Ten-Year-Plan that further facilitates profit opportunism and advancement of PFI 2.0 – the campaign for reproductive health and right to choose is inherently linked in the fight for the restoration of the NHS: a national service publicly owned, publicly provided and free at the point of use. Reform UK announced plans to “restore Britain’s Christian heritage”, with Humanists reporting that the ‘Alliance Defending Freedom’ was investing hundreds of millions – to further the political agenda it successfully pursued in the United States, “which to date has seen the overturning of Roe v Wade and constitutional protections for abortion rights”. ADF has doubled its spending in the UK (over £770,000) to increase the reach of its anti-abortion lobby, as well as on LGBTQ+ rights and education. Heavily involved in the fight against reproductive rights is none other than billionaire and venture capitalist, Peter Thiel, who invested big in 2022 in a period-tracking app. Thiel is the co-founder of Paypal, and Palantir, which secured contracts worth £300M in the NHS and overall £500M contracts in the UK government. Palantir was a client of Global Counsel, the firm founded by Peter Mandelson. Inevitably, the lines will be drawn on human rights – on all fronts of healthcare – including reproductive health, against the NHS – as a battle of “democracy” and “freedom”, freedom of the market of privatised healthcare, the ‘invisible’ hand of the market – deciding who lives – **and who dies**. Read in full, [here](#).



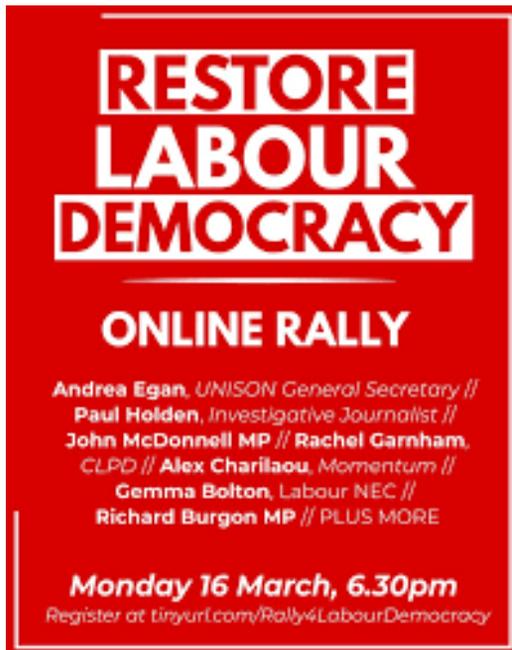
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## Restore Labour Democracy

Online Rally, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Earlier this week, a coalition of trade union leaders, over 25 Labour MPs and Labour Party organisations launched a new call demanding an end to the factional agenda from those at the top of the Labour Party and for the restoration of members' rights and democracy in the Party. The Restore Labour Democracy statement warns that "a narrow, factional agenda is being imposed upon the Party" and that this approach "is increasingly unpopular with the public." Read the statement in full, and add your signature to the petition, [here](#).



Recording of the rally can be viewed [here](#). SHA Chair Dr Rathi Guhadasan addressed the rally, and spoke to the ongoing struggles of trying to progress socialist policies within the party (1 hour 21 mins.). SHA vice-chair, Rachel Garnham, speaking as chair of Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) spoke to the prolonged campaigns undertaken by CLPD to democratise the selection of LP leadership and on holding MPs accountable to members (40 mins.). The rally itself is well worth a full watch.

## SHA Independent Examiner

**Volunteer requested**

Independent Examiner: 2026 SHA AGM approved and are now requesting a volunteer as an independent examiner of the finances for 2026-2027. Esther Giles, SHA National Treasurer has provided guidance to the role, [here](#).

## Mental Health Action: Campaigning to Transform NHS Mental Health Care

Paul Atkinson, London branch

**Mental Health Action**, merger of Keep Our NHS Public and SHA.

"As we all know, mental health is the Cinderella sector of the NHS, disproportionately underfunded, understaffed and undervalued. Currently mental ill-health costs England around £300 bn a year, and while mental illness accounts for over 20% of the disease burden it receives less than 9% of NHS expenditure. People suffering severe mental health issues die on average 20 years earlier than those without such a diagnosis...

Despite campaigns to fight stigmatisation, achieve "parity of esteem" with physical health, tackle the "crisis of common mental health disorders" and establish basic standards of humanity and respect in our NHS services the state of the nation's mental health seems destined for continuous deterioration and neglect. It is impossible to avoid the shameful conclusion that, along with people who are homeless, people on welfare benefits, immigrants, people with physical disabilities, dependent on social care, poor and racialised minorities, suffering chronic and ongoing mental health issues are treated as an underclass in the UK...To join, contact [info@mentalhealthaction.uk](mailto:info@mentalhealthaction.uk). Read in full, [here](#).

## Volunteer opportunities

- Would you like to be involved in a working group for SHA Communications? -Are you interested in a particular area of SHA policy? Or would you like a role in planning for Labour Party Conference or TUC Congress?  
- Women's Labour Party Conference (26/09/2026); Labour Party Conference (27/09-30/09/2026). Last year SHA held [two successful fringe events](#) on restoring the NHS, and on child health and poverty. Please email [admin@sochealth.co.uk](mailto:admin@sochealth.co.uk) for more information.

## CLP, Trade Union Affiliations

**Speakers, events and campaigns**

Is your CLP affiliated to SHA? Affiliations allow SHA branches to send delegates and motions to CLPs. SHA can also help organise speakers on campaigning for the NHS, the SHA response [to the Ten-Year Plan](#), and other specialist health topics. SHA can also speak to trade unions and trades union councils, providing template motions to affiliate and on health related campaigns. Email [admin@sochealth.co.uk](mailto:admin@sochealth.co.uk) for more information.



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