

Momentum NHS background briefing – the key information you need for campaigning

What's happening to our NHS?

- The NHS has been fragmented, run-down and forced into debt by successive governments, and is now being pushed into a financial crisis.
- Our health service has been marketised and, often behind the NHS logo, is increasingly privately-run. This allows private companies to profit from our ill-health.
- This costs more public money, siphoned off into private pockets. Estimated costs of the market range from £4.5bn to £25bn per year.
- NHS contracts worth billions of pounds have been handed to unaccountable private corporations, which have an incentive to cut services to increase their profits. For example, just last week Virgin Care were awarded a £700m contract to run community health and social care services in Bath / North East Somerset.
- The number of NHS beds has been reduced by 55% in the last 25 years. England has one of the lowest numbers of hospital beds in Europe (2.7 hospital beds per 1,000 people in 2014, compared to 8.2 in Germany).
- Almost half of NHS authorities are due to make further cuts to hospital beds and one third of A&E's are facing closure.
- 40% of mental health trusts had their funding cut in the last year.
- 3.6 million people are on waiting lists.
- As Jeremy Hunt has described in parliament, local health systems are being reorganised along the lines of US health firms including Kaiser Permanente, paving the way for private insurance.
- Staff morale is at an all-time low as the Government attacks wages and conditions in its pursuit of a cheap, unregulated workforce, threatening decent patient care.

What are STPs?

- The Government is now pushing forward huge cuts and further privatisation under the banner of 'Sustainability and Transformation Plans' (STPs), based on meeting arbitrary financial targets (£22bn 'cuts' by 2020), rather than meeting people's health needs.
- The STPs are based on profit-driven models, which lack an evidence base. We will lose even more hospital beds and even more pressure will be placed on already overstretched GPs and social care. Buildings are going to be sold off and lower paid staff will replace more highly skilled ones.
- There are 44 areas called 'footprints', each of which is drawing up an STP. These plans have not gone through the normal legislative process, instead Parliament has been bypassed and the plans therefore have no statutory basis or democratic mandate.
- These plans have been kept secret, without Parliamentary or public scrutiny. Now, following public pressure and several councils refusing to agree to the STPs, some of the plans have been published, but often not in full.
- The plans that have been published confirm and exceed campaigners' fears about the extent of cuts and privatisation, which will significantly shrink services so that many more people are denied access and forced to buy private healthcare.

What is Labour' position?

Cuts and privatisations have hugely accelerated since 2010, despite David Cameron promising during the general election that there would be no cuts or "top-down reorganisations" of our health service. There is no democratic mandate for cuts to and privatisation of the NHS.

Labour's policy is to reverse 25 years of expensive marketisation, including PFI, and bring the NHS back into public hands, as a publicly owned and provided, properly funded health service, available to all who need it. Labour will also restore student bursaries and work with trade unions to ensure staff are fairly rewarded for their work.

Help defend our NHS by supporting Labour at the next local and national elections and getting active by joining the Party. Get involved in local campaigns to oppose the implementation of the STP in your area and defend local services from cuts and privatisation. Join the demonstration for the NHS on 4th March 2017.

Call on your local councils to demand full publication of all the STP documents submitted to NHS England, and to refuse to sign up the plans, as Hammersmith and Fulham, Ealing, and Sefton councils have done. The contracts will be signed on 23rd December. Call on your council to refuse to sign up to the STP now, before it's too late.

You can write to your councillors here: <https://weownit.org.uk/blog/its-our-nhs-dont-slash-trash-and-privatise>

For more campaign information, visit: www.peoplesmomentum.com/momentum-nhs