



CHELTENHAM CONSTITUENCY LABOUR PARTY

THE LABOUR PARTY - SPEAKING FOR THE COMMUNITY

COVID-19: SUPPORTING NHS AND SOCIAL CARE WORKERS

COVID-19 has changed lives across the world in ways that were unimaginable only a few weeks ago. For health workers looking after infected patients, it is a deeply worrying time. Cheltenham Labour Party stands fully behind all NHS and private sector care workers and their trades unions.

Currently, The two most important issues facing healthcare workers are:

1. **The provision of personal protective equipment (PPE):** The Government are not yet coming through with their promises. Promises do not protect people. The Labour Party demands immediate protection for all who are caring for patients and potential patients. There are still hospitals across the UK without adequate protective equipment, leaving thousands of frontline workers vulnerable to infection. Some have had to resort to using plastic carrier bags to protect their faces. Why has the Government only now started increasing its supply in the last few weeks? Some NHS staff who have spoken out have been disciplined, prompting accusations that staff are being gagged about flagging the lack of equipment. In 2017 the Government ignored advice to stockpile such equipment in case of an emergency because of costs; the effects of this inaction are now plain to see.
2. **The inadequacy of COVID-19 testing of NHS workers for the virus.** This has been a national scandal. We demand that every NHS worker should be entitled to a test. The Health Secretary has promised to ramp up Britain's testing capacity to 100,000, whereas Germany is testing over half a million people per week. Progress here has been slow and is a disgrace. Our lack of preparedness has meant NHS staff are still being denied tests, which not only means those in the early stages of the illness or without symptoms could pass it on in hospitals, but also that the 25% of the NHS workforce currently self-isolating are unable to find out if they can return work. All at a time when they're needed most.

Austerity has caught-up with the Tories and has cost people their lives. Most of these delays are due to the unpreparedness of Government and the inadequacy of NHS funding in the last ten years of Tory and Tory/Liberal Democrat Government. They have been more concerned with privatising parts of the NHS as a result of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

We must never forget the those who work in nursing and care homes in the private sector. Everyone talks about NHS workers, but there are thousands and thousands of people who care for the elderly and the disabled who are as much at risk as

anyone who works in a hospital. It would seem that they are entirely forgotten on such issues as PPI and testing and we demand that the Government listens to those who representative represent care staff in the private sector and ensure that they are treated properly.

What can you do to support NHS workers?

Thousands of people up and down the country are leaving their homes day in, day out, to fight on the frontline of an invisible war. NHS workers are routinely risking their lives to keep others alive, so it seems only right that we should join in supporting them during their darkest hour. How can you help?

- **Stay at Home**

Following the advice of the Chief Medical Officer by staying home, is one of the key ways we can halt the spread of this invisible killer and help keep pressure off the NHS. The good news is that it might already be having an effect. Sir Patrick Vallance, the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, has said that the coronavirus lockdown measures are making a difference and added that the change in the public's behaviour would break and slow transmission of the virus among the population.

- **Donate Equipment**

NHS workers fear for their lives because of the lack of PPE available to them right now. It has got to the point where schools, colleges and universities are having to step in and donate science lab goggles and other protective equipment to local hospitals. Can you help?

- **Donate Money**

Support the Cheltenham and Gloucester Hospitals Charity COVID-19 Rapid Response Appeal. Go to <https://www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk/charity/what-we-do/campaigns/covid-19-rapid-response-appeal/>. It has been launched to help support our amazing NHS staff, as Gloucestershire's hospitals come under increasing pressure as a result of COVID-19. The appeal aims to provide help to our NHS teams wherever their need is greatest. By making a donation today to the appeal, you can support a number of projects including: (a) *Boost boxes* to give refreshment for teams as they work intensively to care for patients; (b) Wellbeing resources to help NHS staff alleviate stress while working under constant pressure; (c) Establishing fully equipped *Staff Sleep Pods* as places for staff to take a break during periods of intensive work and ensure they are not too tired to drive home; (d) Provide fold-out beds to help staff rest and recuperate; and (e) The provision of alternative transport to work such as taxi or a minibus if public transport is not available.

- **Volunteer as an NHS Responder**

A staggering 750,000 people have signed up to become NHS volunteer responders after it issued an urgent call. While recruitment to the scheme has been temporarily paused to process the huge influx of initial applications, those who have applied are now urged to regularly check their emails as they will receive further details from *GoodSAM app* so they can start volunteering as soon as possible.

- **Show Appreciation.**

On Thursday, 26 March, millions of people up and down the country took to their windows, front doorways and balconies to clap for the nation's key workers, including the NHS staff fighting on the frontline to keep us all safe. It was organised by *#ClapForOurCarers* after seeing it happen in the Netherlands. So, if you feel up to it, I will see you at the window at 8.00 pm **every Thursday**. Thank you for everything NHS and care staff are doing to fight the impact of coronavirus in our communities. We are seeing true public service every minute of every day.

Protecting the NHS from another imminent danger

Nurses, doctors and paramedics are working around the clock as more of us than ever rely on our NHS. This present crisis shows the challenges our health service can face and how vital it is that we all come together to protect it. But with UK trade negotiations with the USA set to begin soon, key US officials have said that they want our NHS to be on the table during the talks so they can negotiate, among other things, increasing the price our NHS is forced to pay for medicines. No trade deal should make the challenges our NHS faces even tougher. If ever we needed to send a strong message to the Government that we want our NHS health protected in law from trade negotiations, it's now. Boris Johnson praises the NHS on one hand; don't let him undermine it with his other. The Labour Party created the NHS and we remain fully committed to doing everything we can to protect it.



Professor Robert Arnott
Secretary
Cheltenham Labour Party

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