

Richard Burgon's Short statement for the Socialist Health Association

The NHS is the greatest example of socialist principles in our country's history. As a Socialist, I believe all our public services should be run on the NHS' founding principles: a universal and comprehensive service that is free at the point of use and funded progressively. But the NHS has been severely undermined by a decade of Tory austerity and, before that by PFI and outsourcing. Any coming free-trade deal with the United States threatens it further. I am standing to be a campaigning Deputy Leader with a focus on building a campaigning Labour Party rooted in every community. Our fight to defend the NHS must be at the forefront of our campaigning in opposition.

I have announced plans as Deputy Leader for a New Clause IV that will enshrine Labour's recent manifesto commitments on public ownership into our Party's constitution. No future Labour government could water these down or ever again support privatisation and outsourcing. For the NHS, this means committing to an NHS that is publicly owned, publicly funded, publicly provided, publicly accountable and free at the point of use.

As Deputy Leader I will empower members, trade unions and socialist affiliates such as the SHA to have much greater democratic say over our party – both in choosing candidates through Open Selection but also in shaping the policy direction and campaigning focus of the Party. This means that our health policies would be shaped much more by Party members. Policies passed at Annual Conference would not just be words on a motion but the basis of our manifesto commitments.