



## **Open letter to Sir Keir Starmer.**

Dear Sir Keir,

On behalf of members of the Socialist Health Association we offer you our sincere congratulations on becoming Leader of the Labour Party and our full support at this difficult time for the United Kingdom. You assume office at a time of crisis, the seeds of which were sown in a decade of Tory (mis) rule.

### **There must be no support from Labour for the values and actions of a Party which:**

1. Led the U.K. out of the Europe Union with no firm plan for the future, weakened our relations with near neighbours, and gave rise to uncertainty among E.U. citizens and others by their hostile environment that cowed workers from across the world who contributed to our economy.
2. Imposed ten years of unnecessary austerity (hitting the poor in particular and widening inequality) which damaged vital public services and undermined the morale of NHS staff, police and prison officers, teachers and social workers; recognised as key workers but not key enough to be protected from Covid 19.
3. "Reformed" the English NHS - first in 2012 de-stabilised by Lansley, replacing co-operation with competition, public service with private profit and a vicious programme of outsourcing that put loyal public servants at the mercy of cost cutting short-termism; then the Five Year Forward Plan splintered the NHS into 42 local services.
4. Weakened the English Public Health system as cash-strapped local authorities raided their allocations and as local isolationism replaced skilled strategic national leadership, such that in 2016, the Government ignored public health advice to prepare properly for a pandemic. This, along with the current chaotic approach from government, has resulted in insufficient supplies of protective equipment and confusion about - and lack of provision of - testing regimes for both public and care workers.

The current crisis stems firmly from the values, incompetence, and inexperience that are the hallmark of Johnson's administration. In coming weeks, we urge you to hold the government to account - not only for its actions as highlighted above - but also for what it has not done as set out below.

Inaction has created a growing level of food insecurity for the less well off, which is only likely to get worse if the UK economy, as predicted, shrinks by 15%. Current efforts by community groups and charities, themselves under threat, are increasingly unable to meet demand.

Food, employment, income, and housing insecurity, will impact adversely upon the mental health of many, as will the death of relatives and friends.

No progress has been made in strengthening social care and funding it commensurate with need, in parity with the NHS - nor indeed, protecting the workforce from Covid infection. Urgent action is needed in this area and we urge you to demand it.

Well sourced stories report hard working doctors, nurses, and other key staff being threatened with penalties if they speak about shortages of protective equipment. Please seek assurance that these allegations will be investigated and any Minister, Civil Servant, Special Advisor or NHS manager issuing such threats will be sacked.

The current crisis has seen the worst and best sides of private enterprise. Companies have quickly offered equipment and support to the NHS. Government has been slow to respond and slow to chide those using the crisis to make quick profits from taxpayers. It has also been too slow to deliver financial support to small businesses and the self-employed. Many on the precarious edge of work have little support, including migrants, refugees, and the homeless.

### **Labour must continue to advocate for a caring state that supports our communities**

The pandemic has shown that our Labour values and understanding of society is correct. We need a strong state sector that improves health, stimulates innovation and protects the environment. The outpouring of community action shows that strong communities save lives and enhance health. The SHA will support you in learning the lessons of the pandemic by fighting for:

- the best responses to the pandemic for staff and patients following WHO guidelines
- a strong, NHS and public health sector responsive to its communities
- an economy that tackles poverty and supports the vulnerable, including migrants, refugees, the homeless and those in the gig economy
- social care set within the public sector, free at the point of use, fully funded through progressive taxation, with training and careers for staff.
- PFI debts written off.
- a mental health sector fit for purpose across the life course,
- a country that is food secure
- a state that supports local community action for health
- the full repeal of the Corona Virus Bill after the pandemic, protecting rights and responsibilities currently removed
- a publicly owned, appropriately scoped, agile scientific research base.

We wish you well in your new role. The SHA has long regarded itself as a "critical friend" of the Labour Party. Let us work together to build a better country.

With our best wishes,

Dr Brian Fisher, Chair, on behalf of the Socialist Health Association

A copy of this letter will go to selected media as advised to your office.