

LETTER TO ALL MEMBERS

Dear SHA member,

I stood for Chair of the SHA to help renew our socialist approach to health and care. We have made great strides in a short time. This was a priority, given the challenge of Covid. After taking up the role, I found that I had inherited a range of difficulties that will take some time to sort out. In the meantime, I want to keep you up to date.

Making Positive Change

1. Social Care Campaign

SHA has an agreed policy on Social Care and Carers. We have also agreed a campaign, jointly with Keep our NHS public (KONP). This will secure social care free at the point of use, supporting independent living, brought into the public sector and paid from taxation – like the NHS. We hope to launch in October. We have union backing and support from other organisations, including John McDonnell's <https://claimthefuture.today/>. John has said he will support us in any way he can. We have also talked to Liz Kendall, Shadow Minister for Social Care.

2. Race policy

The Black Lives Matter movement has rightly challenged many of our perceptions and practices. We intend to take a proposal to CC on developing policy on Racism, Race and Health. If that is accepted, then we shall be bringing people together to explore the topic. Tony Jewell will lead this.

3. Work with the Shadow Team

This has gone well over the last few weeks. We have produced briefings, mainly on public health issues related to Covid, but also on primary care and schools. A few weeks ago, we presented on inequalities to the Shadow Team which we understand was well received. We have followed up with more detailed analysis of workplace democracy and community development in health. The briefings are on the website.

4. Branch activity

Branches continue to be active, fighting hospital closures, challenging racism, fighting to protect people and places from Covid. We need to reach out to branches and see how we can best keep in touch. We need to learn from each other as much as we can.

5. The Covid blogs

These 20 authoritative pieces, over 20 weeks of Covid, have increased the reputation of the SHA. They enabled us to see the progress of Covid from a global socialist perspective. They are all on the website. We have now paused them but may resume if there is an outcry for more!

6. Feedback from the Frontline

In response to a request from Jonathan Ashworth, we have been asking members to feedback their experiences and questions. You have done this in droves, and we have been able to help the Shadow Team confront the government more effectively with your

questions and observations.

7. Social Media

Jean Hardiman-Smith (our Secretary) is doing two large pieces of work via our Twitter and Facebook feeds. One is on the Tory attack on the humanity of refugees, and their rights. The other is on A level results in England, and the unfairness to non-privately educated children the algorithm has produced. Jean wants to hear more voices from experience; more human faces to put to the label “refugee”, or “immigrant”, more real lived experiences of living on no income at all. Do we have anyone dealing with such cases now, who could get us some human stories? Please read our Facebook and Twitter, and circulate and retweet.

Overcoming Internal Difficulties

1. Financial problems

No-one is suggesting malfeasance, but there do appear to have been unconstitutional transactions over the last couple of years. We shall set up an independent investigation as soon as possible to understand and sort out the problems.

2. Returning the SHA to the constitution

We found that the rules that bind the organisation had been bypassed. It is essential that the SHA is, and is seen to be, a rules-based group that will fight relentlessly for socialism and health. That has required some hard changes.

3. Special General Meeting

Those hard changes have not been welcomed by some members and there has been a request for an SGM which aims to force Jean and myself to resign. We shall call a Central Council meeting soon to decide on the practicalities of setting a SGM up. All members need to be able to participate.

I hope you can see that we are moving forward while tackling the difficulties we inherited. If there are aspects of the work that you would like to support – please let us know.

All the best,

Brian