

Labour launches NHS Workforce Commission

Scottish Labour has launched the NHS and Social Care Workforce Commission



The Health and Social Care Workforce Commission has been setup after a decade of SNP mismanagement of our NHS, which has seen a chronic shortage of NHS and social care staff across the sector.

During her time as Health Secretary, Nicola Sturgeon cut training places for nurses and midwives, the result of which is still being felt with 2,500 nurse and midwife vacancies in the NHS.

Scottish Labour has already published research this week that found that private agency spend has increased six-fold in the last five years and that up to 20 NHS services are under threat explicitly because of staff shortages. This also followed reports earlier this week on the underfunding of GPs with one-in-three practices reporting a vacancy.

The commission is being chaired by Dr Miles Mack, an independent and politically neutral expert and the chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners.

The workforce commission will attempt to address the shortage of staff blighting our health service. It will consider how best to decide the appropriate number of training places for health care workers, attract and retain students through enhanced support and examine how to improve plummeting staff morale in the NHS.

Scottish Labour has already committed to lifting the public sector pay cap and the commission will consider ways to clamp down on the spiralling private agency spending in the health service.

Scottish Labour's health spokesperson Anas Sarwar MSP said:

"A decade of SNP mismanagement has left our NHS staff overworked, undervalued, under-resourced and underpaid. We have severe shortages of NHS staff including nurses, midwives, GPs and consultants. This is now starting to impact on services and patient care too with a number of services under threat as we simply don't have the staff to operate them.

"Staff morale is at rock bottom in the health service, with staff reporting there simply aren't enough of them to do the job properly.

"This is part of the legacy left by Nicola Sturgeon who as Health Secretary slashed the number of training places for nurses and midwives. We now have a Health Secretary, Shona Robison, who is out of her depth and out of ideas.

That is why our health service is in desperate need for a meaningful workforce plan.

“Our commission will bring together professionals from across the NHS, representing different sectors, who will together examine the underlying causes for this staffing crisis and importantly develop a strategy and policies to address them.

“I am delighted that we have managed to attract widely respected and experienced individuals who know our NHS so well. They include Dr Miles Mack, who has kindly agreed to chair the commission. As the chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGPs) he brings with him a particular expertise on primary care. He will take up the role while remaining independent of the Labour Party and politically neutral.

“Labour has already led the way in defending our NHS and standing up for NHS staff. We are campaigning across the country to protect local services under threat from the SNP and we brought forward the proposal to scrap the pay cap on NHS staff, which was sadly rejected by the SNP in May.

“With our work on the commission we hope to go further and build a clear and ambitious workforce plan that builds staff morale, makes working in the NHS a more attractive career choice, and helps deliver an NHS and social care system fit for the 21st century.”

Here are more details on our Health and Social Care Workforce Commission:

Commissioners

Dr. Miles Mack – Chair, Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGPs)

Theresa Fyffe – Director, Royal College of Nursing (RCN)

June Andrews OBE – Professor of Dementia Studies

Dave Watson – Scottish Organiser, UNISON

John Marr – Secretary, GMB Scottish Ambulance Service Branch

Kim Hartley Kean – Head of Scotland, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)

Chair of the commission

Dr Miles Mack has agreed to chair our Health and Social Care Workforce Commission. He will bring his knowledge and expertise in particular on primary care to our important work. He will remain politically neutral.

Key areas the commission will be exploring:

- consider how best to decide the appropriate number of training places for health care workers.
- develop a strategy for attracting and retaining NHS and Social Care staff, including considering pay in light of the ongoing pay cap and career pathways
- consider funding models, for example whether direct payments to students will better support healthcare students.
- examine the public sector’s reliance on agency staff.
- analyse the potential impact of demographic changes on future workforce requirements.
- consider what additional frameworks, regulations and legislation could best support the health and social care workforce.

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