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## LEEDS KEEP OUR NHS PUBLIC NEWSLETTER 4.2.21

### Vaccines - privatisation & inequalities

It's great to see that the vaccine roll out seems to be going so much better than almost all of the other Government's initiatives perhaps because they have left it to the NHS and local expertise – well almost. In Oxfordshire Medac, which is part of a larger firm whose chief shareholder is former Tory Party chair, Lord Ashcroft, has scooped up a £350m contract to recruit staff.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/dark-money-investigations/revealed-tory-donor-lord-ashcrofts-outsourcing-firm-given-350m-vaccination-contract/>

Disputes over access with the EU have dwarfed more worrying inequalities in distribution across the world. The relatively rich countries with 14% of the world's populations have bought 53% of vaccine supplies. The People's Vaccines Alliance – a recently established coalition of scientists, activists and not-for-profits like Amnesty International, Oxfam and UNAids warns that 90% of people in low-income countries won't receive vaccinations any time this year!

Meanwhile 200 pharma companies, which have been pumped by public investment, are chasing profits from estimated annual sales of up to \$10bn

<https://lowdownnhs.info/news/vaccine-distribution-saving-the-worlds-rich-and-poor-alike/>

Within the UK some health care staff from overseas, have found it difficult to access the vaccine because they didn't have a National health number, which disabled the digital system from logging their vaccination. NHS England insist this should not be a barrier and efforts are being made to work round the problem. It is important

that no-one falls through the cracks. 'Doctors of the World UK' have flagged up additional concerns that some migrants have been asked for bring passports and other documentation which is likely to deter them from presenting for vaccination.

Bagladeshi organisations in Britain have organised a meeting on **Migrants and Refugees under Covid** at 3pm on Sun. Feb 7<sup>th</sup> with speakers from *Patients Not Passports, Movements for Justice*, *the UN Refugee Council et al.* More info here: <https://www.britbanglacovid.com/2021/01/migrants-refugees-under-covid-public.html>

### Hospitals and staff overwhelmed

With the Covid death toll now well past 100,000, 11 trusts have over half of their beds occupied by a total of over 32,000 Covid patients, ( 70% more than in the first peak) and 3,600 patients are on mechanical ventilation. This had a huge knock on effect on non-covid conditions e.g it is estimated that there will be an additional [18,000 cancer deaths](#) from delayed investigation and treatment.

More evidence has emerged re aerosol spread from coughing and talking which suggests it is vital that all front line NHS staff, not just those on intensive care, have FFP3 masks with an air filter.

### Shifting the blame !

Any small relief in noting that Johnson has toned down his over optimistic, "gung ho" messaging, at least temporarily, is offset by the Government pointing the finger for the desperate toll of deaths at people "breaking the rules" and the spread of

new variants. They don't mention who has consistently delayed imposing restrictions, given inconsistent messages, expects people go into unsafe work-places and provides barely any support to people who need to isolate. A Govt. poll found only 17% of people who have symptoms get tested. Given the UK is second only to Malta is having the lowest rate of sick pay of all OECD countries. It is reasonable to assume that many people are reluctant be tested because they are worried about having to be off work.

The New Economics Foundation note that the UK is also third from the bottom regrading unemployed people. NEF are calling for increased unemployment and sick pay as well as increases to child benefit, properly funded childcare, increased support for renters, an extended eviction ban and an injection of money into small businesses in exchange for a Govt. stake in the business to avoid them folding. See <https://neweconomics.org/2021/01/five-ways-to-make-sure-everyone-can-afford-to-isolate-safely?> and for an excellent and succinct overview from John Puntis: <https://keepourhspublic.com/100000-dead-how-did-we-get-here/>

## Zero Covid

This has become a rallying cry for campaigning against the Government's weak and ineffective SUPPRESS COVID strategy. It was also the title of a recent Conference set up by Labour supporters close to Diane Abbot which is encouraging people to form local LP constituency groups to put pressure on MPs. John Puntis notes that places like New Zealand, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea, which pursued an [elimination strategy](#) massively reduced cases and protected their economies. In NZ there have been just 25 deaths.

## Zero tolerance for Poverty too !



**Poverty is a health issue!** Recent research by the Legatum Institute estimated the pandemic has pushed the total number of people living in poverty up to more than 15m – that is 23% of the population!

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/nov/30/a-most-700000-driven-poverty-covid-crisis-uk-study>

It in the 1940s when Beveridge set out to slay the 5 giants he couldn't have imagined that in 2021 people would be queuing at over 2,000 foodbanks for basic necessities of life in what is the sixth richest country in the world ! 😞



The Legatum Institute also suggested that 700,000 people had been prevented from falling below the breadline by the Chancellor's temporary £20-a-week boost to [universal credit](#), introduced last April to help claimants cope with the extra costs of the pandemic.

Leeds KONP will be supporting a day of Action this Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> called by People Before Profit and Disabled People Against the Cuts urging the Govt. to retain the £20 increase and give it to those on other benefits, like many disabled people, who haven't had any increase at all.

## Three cheers for workers fighting back

Almost 1 in 10 workers have been 'fired and re-hired' since start of the Covid crisis and the picture is even bleaker for workers from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, young workers and workers from low socioeconomic groups. In a recent TUC poll 18 per cent of 18 to 24 year-olds said their employer has tried to re-hire them on inferior terms during the pandemic. However trade unions are beginning to organise some fight back. The National Education Union encouraged members to take a stand against returning to unsafe schools. It was small scale action but had a big impact.

Security staff ( in Unite ) at the Royal Berkshire hospital in London are resisting efforts by their

employers - Kingdom Services Group - to drive down their conditions and deny them a pay rise. They are asking for £12 per hour for security officers and £13p/h for supervisors  
<https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/pay-royal-berkshire-hospital-security-staff-a-wage-they-can-live-on>

**Workers at Sage Nursing Home in North London** ( in “United Voices Of the World” ) are striking for a pay rise to ‘£12 per hour”, decent sick pay, leave, payments for unsocial hours etc. See, <https://www.uvwunion.org.uk/en/campaigns/sage-nursing-home>

**Porters at Heartlands Hospital in Birmingham** are back out on strike against their managers using hire and fire to impose new rotas & shift patterns.



<https://action.unison.org.uk/page/74391/petition/1?ocale=en-GB>

**Meanwhile** the public sector trade unions have submitted a claim for NHS workers and Unison is fronting a **Pay Fair for Care** coalition. See more at <https://www.unison.org.uk/events/pay-fair-care-rally-day-action/>

## The Pandemic & Privatisation Conference



**Thursday  
Feb. 25th  
6.30-  
8.30pm**  
Register  
here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-pandemic-and-privatisation-tickets-133213835167>

Info has just leaked out that Govt. paid £63,000 to social media influencers to spread good stories re the disastrous privatised test and trace system! And the professional body representing laboratory staff, the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS), has expressed concern that Dido

Harding is planning to contract with Medac to staff the first new mega lab in Leamington Spa.  
<https://lowdownnhs.info/news/its-vital-megalabs-have-an-appropriate-skill-mix-ibms/>

Meanwhile the private hospitals who were happy for the NHS to keep them afloat in spring by block booking but underusing their beds, are now backing off from releasing resources to the NHS as they see big opportunities to make money from desperate people prepared to pay privately for non-urgent elective care.

## Resist Council cuts and outsourcing

Up against a budget shortfall of £119m 2020/21 Leeds Local Authority is looking to cut over 600 jobs and close services including two residential homes - Homelea House, in Rothwell, and Richmond House, in Farsley. Richmond House has provided rare but much needed short term and respite care. As it is only a 20 bed unit it seems that they couldn't compete on costs in what is an entirely market driven system. Councillors from west Leeds, members of the public and Leeds Hospital Alert are pursuing objections. Knee-jerk decisions in response to unacceptable Govt. cuts are not the way to plan vital support services and losing yet more publicly accountable, publicly run services and ping-pong people into private homes is not the way to go. You can help by completing the public consultations here - up to 26<sup>th</sup> March <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/your-council/consultations-and-feedback/care-home-consultations>

## Trade Deals Bill : the fight goes on

The Government failed to uphold amendments to the Trade Deals Bill passed in the Lords. These would have protected the NHS from Trade Deals and given Parliament power to vote on trade deals in future

## KONP to launch a People's Covid Inquiry.

Coming soon – an exciting series of meetings, testimony & archive of evidence exploring what has gone wrong and what needs to change NOW! Independent Sage are supporting it all the way. For updates keep an eye on :

<https://www.peoplescovidinquiry.com/>

To donate to the crowdfunder see <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/peoples-covid-inquiry>

Stay Safe:



Take care