

Thousands rally for England's health service

March 4 2017

Thousands of protesters marched in London on Saturday in support of England's state-run National Health Service (NHS).

The march called for "no cuts, no closures, no privatisation" in the NHS and demonstrated against pay restraint.

The campaigners, who say the NHS is at breaking point, hope the march will put pressure on the government ahead of next week's budget.

A pillar of the post-World War II welfare state, the NHS is a beloved institution in Britain, but quality of care and funding have become hot political issues.

Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the main opposition Labour Party, addressed the crowds outside parliament.

"Defending the NHS is defending a basic human value and a basic human right," he said.

"The NHS is in crisis, in crisis because of the underfunding in [social care](#) and the people not getting the care and support they need.

"It is not the fault of the staff. It is the fault of a government who have made a political choice."

People carried placards reading "Health care not profit" "Save our NHS", "Keep our NHS public" and "NHS faces humanitarian crisis".

David Wrigley, a family doctor from Carnforth in northwest England and deputy chair of the British Medical Association council, said:

"Today's march is a cry for help for anyone who uses the NHS because it is in such a desperate situation.

"I see day-to-day the serious pressures in the NHS.

"Patients are not getting the care they deserve. We are a country that can afford the funding that is required."

NHS doctor Kai Robinstein told AFP: "We know from working at the coal face how close to breakdown the NHS is.

"My department has large staff vacancies that mean we can't even fill our duty rosters."

Lesley Mahmood, co-founder of the Save the Liverpool Women's Hospital Campaign, told AFP: "There's actually plenty of wealth in this country, it's not being put into public services, we believe there's enough money to solve all of the issues."

The government says it has increased spending on the NHS.

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