Our NHS is one of Labour’s proudest achievements and making sure we protect patients and those who care for us in our hospitals and homes is vital.

Our NHS and social care systems are under immense pressure. Our NHS is overstretched, underfunded and understaffed and the Conservative Government has failed to address the immense challenges facing our health system. People are waiting longer to be seen in Accident and Emergency departments, the waiting list in England is now estimated to be over 3.9m people, thousands more people are being forced to wait on trolleys in overcrowded hospitals because there is no bed to admit them to and patients are waiting longer for vital cancer treatment. Government plans to reorganise local services will see further unit closures, as well as even deeper cuts to community healthcare services like pharmacies, district nursing and health visitors. A sustained failure to address public health issues has exacerbated the obesity crisis.

This Government has plunged our social care system into crisis, slashing funding and leaving people without sufficient care in their homes and communities. Older people are being stranded on hospital wards for months on end because they have nowhere safe to go. Problems in our social care system are having a severe knock on effect on other services, such as GPs and Accident and Emergency services. The integration of our health and social care systems is key to ensuring people receive the care and support they deserve, and this is something which the Health and Care Policy Commission will be looking at in great detail over the coming months and years.

The Tories promised parity of esteem between physical and mental health, but their rhetoric does not match the reality facing people across the country. Mental health is still regarded as the ‘Cinderella’ service of the NHS and Labour needs to take action to ensure that mental health is not side-lined in key discussions taking place on the future of our health and care system, ensuring that mental health is put on an equal footing with physical health.

Questions for discussion

- What should Labour’s key priorities for health and social care be in order to provide high quality care for patients?
- How can we ensure that we maintain a universal health care system, free at the point of delivery?
- What steps should we take to improve our social care system for older people and those with disabilities?
- How can we ensure that true parity of esteem between physical and mental health is achieved?
- What measures can be put in place to ensure that our NHS and social care systems are equipped with enough doctors, nurses and other healthcare staff to deal with ever increasing demand?
- What action should be taken to deal with the obesity crisis facing our country?
- How can we make sure GPs and hospitals work together to ensure the best care for patients?
- How do we ensure the NHS and social care receives adequate funding in order to meet rising demand?
- Looking to the future, what opportunities using new technology could enhance our health and care services for patients?