

**Second UK People's Health Assembly,
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
10th – 12th April, 2014**

A Call to Action

We, participants at the 2nd UK People's Health Assembly and signatories to this call to action, recognize that....

The health of populations throughout the world is being devastated by global and national neoliberal policies. This is a consequence of the failure to address the economic, social, environmental and commercial determinants of health and confront power and unequal distribution of resources. The response to the recent financial crisis has been to 'restore confidence' of the same organisations that have caused the crisis in the first place. Governments have enacted an 'austerity' agenda cutting health and social spending, effectively deepening and reinforcing the very economic system that has resulted in the crisis in the first place. This 'crisis' has disproportionately affected the poor who carry the burden of the policies, increasing poverty and poor health and deepening inequalities between and within nations. The neoliberal policies (and its 'austerity' agenda) impact not only on the physical but also social and psychological well being of the poor. This, coupled with the denial of dignity, was described by Cathy McCormack as our own 'WMD's, or 'Weapons of Mass Demoralisation'. What was called for instead, was the development of 'Weapons of Resistance'.

There is an urgent need to redesign our political culture and our institutions, globally and nationally. We share the vision of the global PHM for a society with relationships based on solidarity, with policies that are just and fair, that value people not financial systems, and for transformed global governance that is free of corporate influences and unaccountable private individuals. We reject evidence that does not take people's experiences and stories into account, and value greater dialogue and collaboration between communities and research, academic and policy making agencies at different levels.

What is to be done?

No change will occur without the mobilisation of people through the building of grass roots organisations and popular movements. The People's Health Movement is such a movement, working through a range of different campaigns and initiatives. The UK PHM is part of this growing movement, and the Edinburgh People's Health Assembly is a step forward.

We reaffirm our commitment to the People's Health Charter, the Cuenca Declaration and the Cape Town Call to Action that were developed during the three global People's Health Assemblies, and leave Edinburgh with the commitment to:

Challenge the current ideology

- Campaign for human rights and environmental, social and economic justice by challenging the neoliberal ideologies in policies that result in gross inequalities and poor health.
- Challenge the populist vilification of health and safety, human rights and other social goods
- Resist the social and economic changes in the institutions that are responsible for damaging people's health.
- Resist dismantling of the NHS and engage with local campaigns to restore the NHS.
- Create and communicate an alternative 'people centred' vision, analysis, discourse and evidence that focuses on addressing inequity, the determinants of ill health, and social justice

Recognise and build on current strengths:

- Value people's resilience and build resistance from it
- Build on the inspiring examples of work being done in Scotland and the rest of the UK to address the consequences of the global and national policies that damage our health, including the adoption of practical strategies to counter adverse policies and practice
- Challenge the type of research that is the current dominant ideology, and replace it with research that builds on people's stories and experiences at a local level

- Explore mechanisms that move beyond collecting the stories, to exploring the ‘how’ about the way they can be utilised.

Build solidarity

- Mobilise support among the public by providing evidence of the threats to our health, and of the campaigns progressive local alternatives to tackle these threats
- Strengthen solidarity and synergies between different sectors, organisations and networks in the UK, Europe and globally engaged in the struggle for health, noting what is lacking and identifying ways to strengthen it
- Build and strengthen the alliance between health workers, carers and the public to reinstate the caring in our systems

Develop action plans

- Develop national and regional action plans through local consultations and dialogue that challenge vested interests and are based on the evidence of people’s experiences.