



Lords Must Question & Reject Flawed Bill on Tuesday (7 Dec)

Campaigners join with NPC to call on Lords to stop this bad Health & Care Bill

The National Pensioners' Convention is joining with other concerned campaigners to urge the House of Lords to halt the government's new Health and Care Bill.

If the new Bill does not measure up to their scrutiny when it comes before them on Tuesday (7 December), we ask that they send it back to the government to scrap the damaging and ill-conceived legislation and start again.

The Bill, which has now passed through the House of Commons where the government has a majority, is due for a Reading by Peers in the Lords. We know many Peers – and cross-party MPs - are opposed like us to what we view as legislation that fails to solve the devastating immediate and long-term crisis in the NHS and social care sectors.

But of even greater concern, is the crucial new powers it gives the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care over multi-million-pound private-sector service contracts. The contracts would normally be regulated by and accountable to locally controlled Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) - which are being replaced by Integrated Care Systems (ICS).

But the Bill will now allow the new ICS to appoint private health service providers to their Boards, giving them the ability to grant valuable contracts... to private health service providers. And with the Secretary of State having new powers to over-rule local concerns, there will be no way to stop questionable decisions.

The NPC is now joining with other campaign groups to call for the Bill to be stopped. Among them are, Doctors for the NHS, Public Matters, and 999CallfortheNHS.

Jan Shortt, General Secretary of the NPC said: "This Bill truly represents a creeping backdoor privatisation of health care services, which despite government claims, will badly impact on the patient care across the UK.

“The government promises that there are no plans to privatise the NHS – but that is quite different from the *privatisation of health care services* and the increasing number of US owned private companies who provide them to the NHS.

“The Bill’s proposals totally fail to deal with the short-term crisis in health and care services which are buckling under well documented pressure – and are severely inadequate in planning for the future of health and care, with a muddled vision of how they might integrate.

“The NPC believes a fully-funded National Care Service, funded through taxation (*not National Insurance, which taxes the poorest*), and free at the point of need, is the only way forward. Like those in need of care today and tomorrow, the NHS needs a strong, independent partner leading on social care – and that’s what we propose with a National Care Service.”

***The NPC is joining with other groups who share the view that the Health and Care Bill needs to be scrapped. They include, Doctors for the NHS, Public Matters and 999CallfortheNHS, who are quoted below:**

Dr Colin Hutchinson, Chair, Doctors for the NHS: “This Health & Care Bill does not integrate the NHS - it fragments it and takes us further and further away from the idea of a *National Health Service*, massively raising the stakes in the postcode lottery of access to healthcare. Despite claims that this Bill will replace competition with collaboration, England’s NHS will still be defined by a network of commercial contracts - but the current regulated market will have been replaced by an unregulated one, which may benefit somebody, but it won’t be the patient, and it won’t be the taxpayer.

Deborah Harrington, co-director of Public Matters: “This is the second time in 10 years that major legislation has been brought forward for the NHS and Social Care. Serious concerns were raised and not acted on in 2012 which should have been. This Bill is the wrong prescription again and we support the NPC’s call to have it scrapped. Will parliament do the right thing this time?”

Steven Carne, 999 Call for the NHS: “Breaking up the health service into localised fixed budget Integrated Care Systems has already given rise to examples of patients being refused access to hospital services due to their postcode not matching the remit of the hospital budget. The much talked about Postcode Lottery is now a very real threat that the Lords must recognise.”

ENDS

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The National Pensioners Convention was set up in 1979 to champion the rights and welfare of the UK's older people. It now represents more than 1.5 million people in over 1,000 different organisations across the UK and holds an Annual Convention – a pensioners' parliament - to debate issues affecting older people.

NB: Most pensioners live on £10,000 a year or less, with only 545,000 of them paying tax at the higher rates, while around 6 million don't earn enough to pay any tax at all.